NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
3 0109 00088 1907

All on a Summer's Day

FLORENCE RYERSON

COLIN CLEMENTS

PS 3535 Y5 A7 1928

Ryerson 47167
All on a summer's day.

DATE DUE

NOV 8 1982			
FEB 7 1983			
FEB 13 1984			
FEB 11 1985			
DEC 6 1988			
FEB 15 1990			

Subject To Recall After 2 Weeks

LIBRARY
NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA

DEMCO

WITHDRAWN
NDSU

ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY
AND
SIX OTHER SHORT PLAYS

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-EIV-993

ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY

AND SIX OTHER SHORT PLAYS

BY

FLORENCE RYERSON

AND

COLIN CLEMENTS

4-7167

SAMUEL FRENCH

Founded 1845
Incorporated 1898

THOS. R. EDWARDS, Managing Director

NEW YORK CITY :: :: MCMXXVIII

SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD. :: :: :: LONDON

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright, 1928 by Samuel French

These plays in their present form are dedicated to the reading public only, and no performance, representation, production, recitation or public reading, or radio broadcasting may be given except by special arrangement with Samuel French. Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that all the plays in this volume, being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Empire (including the Dominion of Canada,) and the other countries of the Copyright Union, are subject to a royalty, and any one presenting the plays without the consent of the owners or their authorized agents will be liable to the penalties by law provided. Applications for the professional and amateur acting rights must be made to Samuel French, 25 West 45th St., New York, N. Y.

22 - 29800

PS
3535
.45
A7
1928

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

To
KATHARINE HOOKER

CONTENTS

	PAGE
All on a Summer's Day	3
On the Lot	15
Men Folk	31
Storm	51
Letters	71
A Romantic Interval	91
Love Is Like That	105

ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY

Copyright, 1926, by D. Appleton Company.
Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

ONE.

TWO.

THREE.

MAMMY, *a dark messenger of Fate.*

ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY

SCENE: *As symbols of their respective ages:* ONE *wears a rose at her waist,* TWO *wears heavy horn glasses, and* THREE *wears a little woolen shawl around her shoulders. In their very best crinolines,* ONE, TWO *and* THREE *are seated on three little red stools, before a gray curtain, busily sewing colored yarn crosses into three samplers.* ONE *sews this way,* TWO *sews that way, and* THREE *sews straight up and down.*

ONE. [*She sighs.*] Oh, dear!

TWO. [*She sighs.*] Oh, dear!

THREE. [*She sighs.*] Oh . . . oh, dear!

ONE. Nothing ever happens here.

TWO. Absolutely nothing, dear.

THREE. We are growing old, I fear.

ONE. Old?

TWO. Not old!

THREE. Yes; old.

ONE. [*Folding her hands.*] Oh, dear!

TWO. [*Folding her hands.*] Oh, dear!

THREE. [*Folding her hands.*] Oh . . . oh, dear!

ONE. [*She turns toward* TWO.] What do you want most to happen?

TWO. I? [*She turns to* THREE.] What do you want most to happen?

THREE. I? [*She leans forward and addresses* ONE.] What do you want most to happen?

ONE. [*With no hesitation.*] I want to get married.

TWO. [*Surprised, plainly so.*] Married?

THREE. [*Shocked, plainly so.*] Married!

ONE. Yes, I do . . . married.

TWO. Ugh!

THREE. Ugh!

ONE. [*She turns toward* TWO.] Well, then, what do you want?

TWO. I want to be . . . to be famous!

THREE. Famous? Ugh!

ONE. Ugh!

TWO. [*She turns toward* THREE.] What do you want?

THREE. I want to be . . . I want to be wealthy!

ONE. Wealthy? Ugh!

TWO. Ugh!

THREE. Yes; that's my wish.

[*They sit and sew in silence.* ONE *sews this way,* TWO *sews that way, and* THREE *sews straight up and down.*]

ONE. Oh, dear!

TWO. Oh, dear!

THREE. Oh . . . oh, dear!

ONE. We just sew—

TWO. And sew—

THREE. And sew—

ONE. Nothing ever happens to us.

TWO. No . . . nothing, nothing ever happens to us.

THREE. Sh-h-h . . . Sh-h-h, my dears. Don't fuss.

ONE. [*Hopefully.*] But something might.

TWO. [*More hopefully.*] Yes . . . something might.

THREE. [*Most hopefully.*] Never has . . . but it might.

[*They sew on for a moment in silence.*]

ONE. [*Doubtfully.*] I doubt it.

TWO. [*More doubtfully.*] And I.

THREE. [*Most doubtfully.*] Well . . . so do I.

ONE. Oh, dear!

TWO. Oh, dear!

THREE. Oh . . . oh, dear!

ONE. [*Shaking her finger.*] But then, one never knows what may happen.

TWO. [*Shaking her head.*] One can never tell.

THREE. [*Shaking her shoulders as though she felt a draft.*] True . . . one can never be sure!

ONE. I *would* like to be married.

TWO. Ugh!

THREE. Ugh!

ONE. Ugh?

TWO. I *would* like to be famous.

THREE. Ugh!

ONE. Ugh!

TWO. Ugh?

THREE. I *would* like to be wealthy.

ONE. Ugh!

TWO. Ugh!

THREE. Ugh?

ONE. Anyway, I'm romantic.

TWO. Romantic? I'm idealistic.

THREE. Romantic? Idealistic? I'm practical.

ONE. You see, I'm still young.

TWO. I'm not old!

THREE. I'm not so *very* old.

ONE. It's nice we're not all alike.

TWO. Yes, much nicer.

THREE. Oh, very much nicer.

ONE. It makes our conversations more interesting.

TWO. Yes, it makes them very much more interesting.

THREE. Our conversations? Interesting? Oh, decidedly so.

[*They sit and sew in silence.* ONE *sews this way,* TWO *sews that way, and* THREE *sews straight up and down.*]

ONE. Oh, dear!

TWO. Oh, dear!

THREE. Oh . . . oh, dear!

[*The curtains at the back part and a dark-faced messenger of Fate in the form of a dark* MAMMY *enters.*]

MAMMY. [*She holds up a yellow envelope to* THREE.] Telegraf fo' you-all, honey.

THREE. Telegram for me?

TWO. For her?

ONE. A telegram?

MAMMY. Yes'm [*She blinks.*] Ah see'd a black cat dis mo'nin'.

THREE. It's from my bankers!

TWO. Your bankers? What do they say?

ONE. Perhaps your account is overdrawn again.

THREE. No; it says—

TWO. What does it say?

ONE. Tell us!

THREE. My oil wells—

TWO. Your oil wells—

ONE. Really?

MAMMY. Black cats don' mean nofin'.

THREE. [*Deliriously.*] I'm wealthy!

TWO. Your wish has come true.

ONE. Wishes sometimes do!

THREE. Think of it.

TWO. Just think of it!

ONE. I am.

MAMMY. Ah knowed theah was luck due dis heah house.

[*She shuffles out.*] Honey, ah's just flabeagusted fo' you-all.

ONE. It's wonderful!

TWO. Just wonderful.

THREE. [*She rises and shakes down her skirts.*] I must run along and sign some checks . . . sign some checks.

[*She hurries out.*]

ONE. [*After a pause.*] Just think, she got her wish.

TWO. [*After a longer pause.*] I wish I'd get mine.

ONE. And I wish I'd get mine!

TWO. I'd love to be famous.

ONE. I'd love to be married.

TWO. Pooh . . . anybody can get married.

ONE. [*Sharply.*] Everybody doesn't, I notice.

TWO. [*Looking over the top of her glasses.*] Don't be nasty!

[*They sit and sew in silence.* ONE *sews this way, and* TWO *sews that way.*]

ONE. Oh, dear!

TWO. Oh, dear!

[*Again the curtains part and the ominous black messenger enters.*]

MAMMY. Telegraf fo' you-all, honey. 'Pears like dis am a busy day.

ONE. For me?

MAMMY. [*She hands the telegram to* TWO.] No, honey . . . you-all's too young to get telegrafs.

TWO. Oh! Oh-o-o!

ONE. [*All eyes and ears.*] What is it?

MAMMY. [*Grinning from ear to ear.*] Ah jus' been tellin' ma fo'tune in a tea cup and—

TWO. [*Gasping for breath.*] I'm . . . I'm famous!

ONE. Famous!

TWO. The first edition of my novel is sold out three months before the date of publication.

MAMMY. [*She shuffles out.*] Ah knowed dem tea leaves don' lie! Nebah! Nebah!

ONE. Think of it . . . famous!

TWO. Isn't it wonderful?

ONE. And it was your wish, too!

TWO. [*She rises and shakes down her skirt, then turns and hurries out.*] I must run along and . . . and autograph some photographs.

ONE. [*She sits and sews in silence. Slowly, as if deep in thought, she sews this way.*] Oh, dear— [*She fumbles with the rose at her belt.*] Oh, dear—

[*The curtains again part and again that dark messenger of Fate comes forward.*]

MAMMY. Honey—

ONE. Is it a telegram for me this time?

MAMMY. [*Sympathically.*] No, honey, jus' a lettah for you-all.

ONE. Letter? Letter? Give it to me!

MAMMY. Lettahs ain't no 'count.

ONE. Give it to me!

MAMMY. Theah, honey. [*She hands* ONE *the letter.*] 'Pears like you-all is mighty anxious to heah from—

ONE. Oh! Oh! Oh-h-h-h!

MAMMY. [*She stands blinking with interest.*] Is you-all wealthy, honey?

ONE. [*Still reading.*] Eh? No.

MAMMY. [*She takes a step closer.*] Is you-all famous, honey?

ONE. [*Now reading the letter for the third time.*] Eh? No.

MAMMY. [*After a long pause.*] 'Pears like a mighty long lettah.

ONE. M-m-m-m.

MAMMY. Is dey any answer, honey?

ONE. [*Her thoughts far away.*] Eh?

MAMMY. No answer?

ONE. [*She lays the letter in her lap and again takes up her sewing.*] No . . . not just now.

MAMMY. [*She turns and shuffles out.*] Ah guess we ain't so lucky aftah all. Ah knowed black cats don' bring no good luck.

ONE. [*Sewing again.*] Oh, dear! [*She looks around quickly to make sure that* MAMMY *is well out of sight, then, rereading the letter for the fourth time, she carefully folds it up and pokes it down the front of her dress to a spot close above her heart. Then another thought seizes her; quickly she takes the rose from her belt and, pulling off the petals, shakes them down over the letter. She giggles, kicks her feet with delight and again taking up her sampler begins deliriously to sew this way, that way, and straight up and down.*] Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, *dear!*

THE CURTAIN FALLS GENTLY

ON THE LOT

Copyright, 1928, by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements.
Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

THE GIRL.

THE BOY.

PROPS. [*If desired, the character of* PROPS *may be eliminated except for his one-line curtain speech, thus making the play a duologue.*]

ON THE LOT

SCENE: *The curtain rises slowly, allowing us to gaze upon a remote corner of an old-fashioned garden. At the back is a low hedge, beyond, half swallowed by the night, a weeping willow nods drowsily; a painted tree against a painted sky. At one side of the trim strip of lawn a plaster cupid is chubbily balanced upon one foot, his outstretched bow and arrow threatening intruders.*

The darkness is broken by a slanting shaft of moonlight through which flutters, now and then, a tiny silver moth. And—believe it or not—the air is filled with a faint, elusive fragrance. Can it, oh, can it be—moth balls?

Across the front of the stage stands a marble bench and in front of it two figures are engaged in a minuet. The boy, in his black stock, plum-colored coat and bravely embroidered waistcoat above tight gray trousers, is bending over the girl who is a dainty slip of a thing with a heart-shaped face and golden curls. Her dress is all lace and ruffles, rows upon rows upon rows of them from the sash of her bodice to the tips of her tiny slippers, a valentine lady come to life.

In the dim distance there is faint music and it is to the strains of this the two are dancing. For a moment they advance and retreat, balancing and turning in a

stately fashion, then they end with a charming low bow, and stand erect. The girl drops down on one end of the bench, the boy on the other. He takes a handkerchief from his sleeve and mops his brow. She lifts up the bottom of her dainty skirt (displaying frilled pantalettes) and fans herself with the silken hem. Her voice, when she speaks, is crisp, and her intonation modern.

THE GIRL. Hotter 'n Hell—ain't it?

THE BOY. And how!

THE GIRL. I don't think we gotta rehearse that dance no more. We got it good enough to suit the director.

THE BOY. [*Gloomily.*] Nothing'll suit that director. He's kep' the company at it since six o'clock 'n' what's he shot? Ten scenes—that's all! Ten scenes!

THE GIRL. But night work's better 'n day work. This Hollywood sun sorta dries y' up like crisp bacon. [*For a moment she is silent, then she sighs.*] Um—bacon. Don't that make y'hungry?

THE BOY. Me? Hungry? Oh no—no. [*But we plainly see he is not telling the truth.*]

THE GIRL. Aw, come off'n your perch. Everybody's hungry that's workin' extra. That's why I like this night stuff. They feed y' at twelve o'clock—free of charge. [*She leans back and looks out.*] Seems like it must be almost twelve o'clock now. I sure don't wanna miss th' feed.

THE BOY. They're still shootin' close-ups. Don't you hear

the cussin'? Props'll call us when the nose bag's laid out.

THE GIRL. [*She giggles.*] Gee, you're beginnin' t' get human. Say—I been dyin' t' ast y'—why don't y' take off your collar 'n give your neck a rest? Y' look awful uncomfortable in that get up y' got on.

THE BOY. [*Stiffly.*] I'm all right. They might call us for another shot any minute.

THE GIRL. [*Wisely.*] You're sure new on this lot! Clarkson takes three hours t' every shot, unless he's drunk—then he takes four! He won't be wantin' us till after lunch so y' might 's well kick off your shoes 'n' give your arches a rest.

THE BOY. Thanks.

[*He reaches down, slips off his shoes and gives a long sigh of relief. The sigh is echoed by* THE GIRL, *who has also kicked off her slippers. She sees that there is a hole in one silk toe and hastily replaces the slippers.* THE BOY *is too polite or embarrassed to notice. There is a long pause, then* THE GIRL *looks over at* THE BOY *and smiles.*]

THE GIRL. Why don't y' move over some—closer? I won't bite y'.

THE BOY. Want me to?

THE GIRL. Why not?

THE BOY. [*Bashfully.*] Oh—I dunno.

THE GIRL. Huh? Don't y' want t'?

THE BOY. Want t' what?

THE GIRL. Move over—closer.

THE BOY. Sure. Only I thought maybe y' didn't want me to.

THE GIRL. T' what?

THE BOY. Move over—closer.

THE GIRL. I wouldn't be askin' y' t' if I didn't want y' t', would I? [*After a short pause.*] I dunno what's wrong with me t'night. Maybe—maybe it's th' moon. [*She turns her face and looks up into the light.*]

THE BOY. Moon? What moon? [*He leans forward, follows her gaze, then looks startled.*] That ain't no moon—that's just a—

THE GIRL. [*Quickly.*] Sh-h-h! Don't say it! [*Looks at him severely.*] What if it is only a—what y' was goin' t' say it was? What if it is? Why y' gotta go spoiling everything? Ain't things bad enough in this ol' world without y' go callin' a spade a shovel? Ain't they? Gosh—that's just a man all over again. 'N' y' look so sorta romantic in them clothes!

THE BOY. I'm sorry. I didn't mean t' spoil things.

THE GIRL That's all right. I ain't mad. Only—I s'pose when y' been actin' in th' movies as long as I been, y' sorta learn t' take your romance where y' can find it. Y' get so y' can't tell the real from th' fake. But what's th' difference? If y' can get a kick out of' em I guess Kleig lights 's as good as a moon! [*Her voice changes.*] Y' ain't moved over yet.

THE BOY. [*Sliding along the bench.*] Thanks!

THE GIRL. What?

THE BOY. [*Completely gone off the deep end.*] Yea.

THE GIRL. [*After a long pause.*] Umhuh.

THE BOY. Huh?

THE GIRL. What 'd y' say?

THE BOY. Thought you said somethin'.

THE GIRL. Me? I just said umhuh. What d' you think I said?

THE BOY. Oh—I dunno. I thought maybe y' said somethin' else.

THE GIRL. [*Indignantly.*] I didn't either! [*She moves away a trifle.*] That's just like all you movin' pitcher guys. If a girl's even sociable right away y' go 'n' think—

THE BOY. What 'd I think? I didn't either go 'n' think! I wasn't even thinkin'!

THE GIRL. Yes y' did. Y' just said so.

THE BOY. Did what?

THE GIRL. Think!

THE BOY. Honest to Gawd I didn't!

THE GIRL. [*Wailing.*] Oh—now you're swearin' at me!

THE BOY. I didn't!

THE GIRL. Y' did too! I heard y' swear. [*She sniffles pathetically.*] Because I gotta earn my livin' 'n' pick out pitchers t' do it in—'n' just because I gotta profile 'n' my hair is curly y' think I'm that sort of a girl!

THE BOY. What sort?

THE GIRL. [*The little minx allows a sob to escape her.*] That sort. Don't try t' pretend! Y' know what I mean —that sort!

THE BOY. [*Frantically.*] I do not! Honest t' Gaw—I mean, honest I don't. Why—why even when y' left th' set 'n' sort give me th' 'come hither' over your shoulder as y' came out here I didn't think it—even when y' ast me t' move over I didn't. Say—

THE GIRL. [*Petulantly.*] Oh—even when I give y' th' 'come hither,' eh? Even when I ast y' t' move over, eh? So that's what y' was thinkin' after all!

THE BOY. I'm tellin' y' I didn't think that. That's just what I'm tryin' t' explain if y'll give me a minute t' explain it in. Even when y' done what I said y' done I didn't think it.

THE GIRL. But I didn't do what y' said I done.

THE BOY. [*He opens his mouth several times before he speaks.*] Well—even if y' had of—even if y' had of done what I said y' done—I wouldn't have thought—

THE GIRL. [*Decidedly.*] I don't want to hear any more about it!

THE BOY. [*A bit bewildered.*] About what?

THE GIRL. About anything.

THE BOY. [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] Suit yourself! [*He begins to slip into his shoes.*]

THE GIRL. What y' doin'?

THE BOY. [*Rising.*] Guess I'll be gettin' back on the set.

THE GIRL. Y' mean you're leavin'?

THE BOY. Sure. Why not? Y' ain't makin' me feel any too popular. I'll say y' ain't.

THE GIRL. Ain't what?

THE BOY. Popular! Thinkin' I thought y' was thinkin' somethin' y' wasn't 'n' neither was I 'n' then arguin' about it. Gee! Life's too short! [*He starts away.*]

THE GIRL. [*She reaches out, takes his hand and pulls him down beside her.*] Don't be silly! Sit down 'n' we'll forget all about it! I'm perfectly willin' t' forgive y'.

THE BOY. Forgive me for what?

THE GIRL. For everythin'.

THE BOY. [*A trifle bewildered.*] Thanks.

[*At this moment the studio property man, familiarly known as* PROPS, *enters from the side. His cap is pulled down over one eye and a cigarette dangles limply from his lower lip. Not at all interested in* THE GIRL *and* THE BOY, *he goes about his business rolling up the property lawn. This is practically under their feet and* THE GIRL *is a trifle startled, she leans toward* THE BOY.]

THE GIRL. Oh!

THE BOY. They're just striking the set.

THE GIRL. Oh! [*Props walks off, right, carrying the lawn under his arm. She returns to her subject.*] I'm perfectly willin' t' forgive y' but just th' same—I gotta say all men is like that.

THE BOY. Like what?

THE GIRL. Oh—like men.

THE BOY. There y' go again!

THE GIRL. Well, they are like that, ain't they?

THE BOY. What 'd y' expect 'em t' be like?

THE GIRL. [*Vaguely.*] Oh—I dunno.

[*She pauses a moment.* PROPS *appears at back, tucks Cupid under his arm and disappears.*]

THE BOY. What 'd y' mean y' dunno?

THE GIRL. I s'pose y'll think I'm crazy or somethin'—but d' y' know what I thought when I seen y' t'night—in them clothes 'n' everythin'? I thought—he ain't like a man exactly—he's like—th' kinda hero y' read about in a book. Kinda strong 'n' noble like. Different from all th' guys y' meet out here—all these guys what tries t' hold your hand 'n' neck y' th' first time they buy y' a hot dog 'n' coffee.

THE BOY. Hot dog 'n' coffee! Um!

THE GIRL. There y' go!

THE BOY. Go where?

THE GIRL. Laughin' at me.

THE BOY. I wasn't.

THE GIRL. Y' was too.

THE BOY. [*Shaking his head.*] No, I wasn't. It was just what y' said about "hot dogs 'n' coffee." Kinda made me think about bein' hungry.

THE GIRL. Ain't that just like a man? Thinkin' about his stomach when a girl's talkin' of higher things. [*She pauses.*] Well, go ahead 'n' think about it.

THE BOY. I wasn't only thinkin' about my stomach. I was thinkin' about somethin' else too. Y' c'n think about two things at once, can't y'?

THE GIRL. [*Snuggling up to him.*] Tell me—what was y' thinkin'?

THE BOY. [*Hesitatingly.*] I was kinda—kinda thinkin' somethin' as I sat here lookin' at y'. It just come t' me all of a sudden how much y' looked like—like that Gish girl.

THE GIRL. [*Sitting up very straight.*] Lillian?

THE BOY. Yea—only better lookin'. That is—your nose 's kinda like Lillian's but your mouth is more like Bebe Daniels'—sorta full—y' know—'n' puckery.

THE GIRL. [*Ecstatically.*] Bebe Daniels! [*She moves closer.*] But she's got brown eyes.

THE BOY. Yea—I know. [*He studies her eyes for a moment.*]

THE GIRL. What y' lookin' at?

THE BOY. Your eyes. They're more like—like Greta Garbo's —deep y' know—'n' kinda—kinda—[*He gives it up.*] Gee, you oughta screen great!

THE GIRL. I guess I do. Totmann gave me a real good part in "The Passion Flower." I walked in with a card and gave it to Rita Rieno—like this. [*She rises and pantomimes.*] Then he let me stand right there so's it was

a close-up. Gee! It woulda been a swell bit. [*She sighs and sits down.*] Only it was all cut out in th' pitcher.

THE BOY. [*Absent-mindedly putting his arm around her.*] I'll bet it was because Rieno was jealous. You're lots better lookin' than she is. Honest to Gaw— I mean, honest y' are.

THE GIRL. [*Rolling her eyes.*] Gosh—what a wonderful lover you'd make. [*Quickly drawing away.*] I mean on the screen, acourse.

THE BOY. [*Moving away to his end of the bench.*] Oh —of course.

[*For a moment he sulks.* THE GIRL *shyly studies him. As she does so* PROPS *comes in and carries off one of the rose trees.* THE GIRL *decides she has been too coy and leans forward.*]

THE GIRL. Do you know who you remind me of?

THE BOY. [*Still sulky.*] Who?

THE GIRL. [*Seriously.*] When I half close my eyes 'n' look at your profile you make me think of—John Barrymore.

THE BOY. [*He runs his fingers through his hair with the famous Barrymore gesture.*] Barrymore? D' y' think so? Honest?

THE GIRL. [*Nodding her head.*] Umhuh. Only you're more sorta broad than he is—more like John Gilbert.

THE BOY. [*Lost, completely lost.*] Gosh—John Gilbert! Gosh!

[*Quietly* PROPS *enters from the back and in his business-like way picks up and carries off the second potted rose.*]

THE GIRL. [*Who has been dreaming.*] Wouldn't it—say, wouldn't it be lovely if—

THE BOY. [*Suddenly brought to earth.*] Yeah?

THE GIRL. If—no, I won't tell y'.

THE BOY. Why not?

THE GIRL. Y' might think almost anythin'—or maybe laugh.

THE BOY. Honest to Gaw— Say, honest, I wouldn't think almost anythin'—'n' I wouldn't laugh at anythin' you tell me. [*Coaxingly.*] Go on 'n' tell me.

THE GIRL. [*After turning it over in her mind.*] Well, I was thinkin'—y' won't laugh? [THE BOY *shakes his head.*] I was thinkin' wouldn't it be wonderful if someday I was a great star 'n' you—you was playin' opposite t' me—'n', that is—we was doin' a scene t'gether 'n'—

THE BOY. A love scene?

THE GIRL. Yea.

THE BOY. Gosh! That'd be great! Say—I got it! [*He rises and moves away a little.*] Like this, see? I'm standing here 'n' you're over there.

THE GIRL. [*Taking her place.*] Yea—s'pose you've been away.

THE BOY. Yea—I been t' th' war.

THE GIRL. 'N' I ain't seen y' for maybe a year.

THE BOY. Yea—'n' I been shot in th'—[*He pauses and considers his anatomy.*]

THE GIRL. In th' arm.

THE BOY. No, I'll need all my arms for th' clinch. Let's see—I been shot in th' foot. I come in limpin'—like this. 'N' you—you're over there—

THE GIRL. With a rose—like this. [*She picks a rose from her corsage and begins to count the petals.*] He loves me —he loves me not—

THE BOY. I stand here 'n' look at y' 'n' then I say—"Beloved!" Like that. "BELOVED!"

THE GIRL. 'N' I hear y' 'n' at first—just at first—I can't believe it.

THE BOY. That's the ticket.

THE GIRL. I think I'm hearin' things. So I stand like this 'n' I'm so surprised I drop my rose.

THE BOY. Then y' turn around.

THE GIRL. Slowly—v-e-r-y slowly.

THE BOY. 'N' see me standin' here—like this—

THE GIRL. 'N' I don't move for a minute. I just look at y'.

THE BOY. Yea—then I hold out my arms.

THE GIRL. [*Suiting the action to the words.*] Then I throw myself into 'em!

THE BOY. 'N' I put my lips down on your hair—like this.

THE GIRL. 'N' I snuggle up—like this.

[*There is a long pause.* PROPS *enters from the back, looks*

about for something more to "strike," picks up the bench and walks out with it. The music stops suddenly.]

THE GIRL. [*After an enchanted moment.*] Then I raise my lips—like this.

THE BOY. An' I bend down—

[*Their lips meet.* PROPS' *head appears at the back.*]

PROPS. [*Briskly.*] Lunch! [*They do not hear him.*] Lunch! [*Still they do not hear him.*] LUNCH! *He looks at the pair with disgust.*] Ah—hell!

[*With a gesture of extreme nausea he reaches down to a switchbox and, in three distinct clicks, turns off the moonlight. Upon the ensuing darkness the*

CURTAIN FALLS GENTLY

MEN FOLK

Copyright, 1928, by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements.
Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

GRANNY, *The Grandmother.*
JINNY, *The Mother.*
ROSE, *The Wife.*

MEN FOLK

SCENE: *The interior of a room with rough board walls and an unfinished, timbered ceiling. From the smoky rafters hang nets, strings of cork floats, bits of tarpaulin and other nondescript odds and ends used by fishermen. The furniture is crude and homemade. At the right stands a table with several chairs near it. Across the room, at the left, is a stone fireplace against which is hung copper pots and earthenware cooking utensils, a door near it leads to another part of the house. In the wall at the back is a door and a long low window overlooking the wharves, beyond which may be seen the vague outlines of masts and spars. A heavy chest has been pushed up under the window at the back, near it, partly hidden by the fireplace, stands a grindstone.*

The curtain rises upon the dusty light of late afternoon. Granny, in a low rocker, sits, hands on knees, staring into the glowing embers of the low fire. She is humming a weird sort of chant, her voice rising and falling like the wind at sea.

After a short pause Jinny enters from the outside door. She glances around the room, removes a knitted shawl from her head, and hangs it on a peg near the door. She is a woman of forty-five, her face is hard and lined with

grim wrinkles, her graying hair is drawn back tightly from the temples.

During the action of the play the wash of a wave can be heard distinctly now and then.

JINNY. [*Moving toward the fire.*] Wind's dyin' down some. [*She looks into the empty wood box.*] No wood.

GRANNY. [*She stirs in her chair, then comes out of her half trance with a start.*] Eh? What y' say, daughter?

JINNY. I said, no wood in th' box.

GRANNY. Rose ain't here.

JINNY. I sent her out for drift-wood more'n an hour ago. [*She kicks the box.*] An' not a stick t' show for it! It's high time she learned t' do somethin' 'cept dream.

GRANNY. [*Rocking back and forth.*] She's young yet . . . takes time t' learn what's expected of women whose men folk follow th' sea. Best be kind t' th' young ones.

JINNY. [*She moves over to the table and begins setting out pans.*] Young! Reckless she is, with a mind for nobody but herself.

GRANNY. She has a mind for David.

JINNY. Maybe. [*Bitterly.*] But what my boy could see in her I don't know . . . I don't know. The ways of life are queer. Him born o' th' sea like his father 'n' his father's father before him . . . 'n' her with her white face, settin' there on that chest, hours at a time, starin' out o' th' window . . . talkin' foolishness about things growin'.

GRANNY. [*After a pause.*] That's her inland rearin' . . .

inland girls grow white at th' sight o' th' sea. [*She stares into the fire.*] Terrible thing th' sea . . . like a screamin' old woman . . . beatin' again' th' rocks . . . runnin' up t' th' door like as if she wanted t' drag things down with her. Snatchin' our men folk away from us! Terrible thing t' watch an angry sea. Took my father, she did . . . 'n' then she took my man. [*The wash of a wave is heard.*] Maybe Rose's afeared of that old woman out there.

JINNY. She'd best thought o' that afore she took David. He was born t' th' sea. He can't change. A woman that's married to a man like that ain't got a right t' be afeared.

GRANNY. [*Rocking again.*] Ain't no right or wrong to it . . . try as y' will t' shut it out it comes creepin' . . . creepin' over y', like a high tide at night.

JINNY. [*She drops one of the pans.*] Oh . . .

GRANNY. What's that?

JINNY. Nothin' . . . nothin'. Just one o' th' pans slipped. It's two months tomorrow th' fleet went out 'n' durin' that time she ain't lifted her hand t' housework . . . just dreamin' th' time away.

GRANNY. [*Nodding over her shoulder.*] Her heart's out there with him somewhere.

JINNY. No matter . . . it's her place t' help with th' chores.

GRANNY. [*She begins to rock again.*] Let her be, daughter. She'll steady with th' years.

JINNY. [*Who has moved over to the window at the back.*] Steady? Her steady? [*She leans forward.*] There she is

now. Dancin' along th' dunes like a bit o' crazy sea foam tossin' in th' wind. [*She presses her face to the window pane.*] Stead o' drift-wood it's flowers she's carryin' . . . bringin' flowers t' this house!

GRANNY. [*Fearfully.*] Flowers! No . . . No . . . She can't bring 'em here. With th' fleet still out . . . they'll put a curse on th' house. Tell her to throw 'em away!

[*Outside Rose can be heard singing. She passes the window at the back and an instant later the door is thrown open. The girl stands in the doorway, the setting sun behind her, peering into the gray room. She is hatless and her hair is blown about her face; her eyes are wide and shining. There is about her—in sharp contrast to the dark room—a breath of outdoors. Her arms are filled with wild flowers.*]

ROSE. [*Gaily.*] Hello! [*She runs across the room to* GRANNY.] Look! [*She holds up her flowers proudly.*] I found them beyond the dunes . . . still green in spite of the storm. [*She turns to* JINNY, *brushes off her skirt with a free hand.*] I climbed up the top of a dune on my hands and knees to get them!

GRANNY. [*Crouching back into her chair.*] You shouldn't bring flowers here!

ROSE. [*Turns and stares at her bewilderedly.*] I shouldn't have—

JINNY. [*There is fear in her voice.*] You can't leave them here!

ROSE. [*Turns back to* JINNY.] But—

JINNY. Take 'em out . . . take 'em out, I say!

GRANNY. Throw 'em away! [*Straightening suddenly.*] Don't throw 'em on th' water . . . it's a bad sign t' have flowers floatin' out t' sea. Throw 'em back where you found 'em!

ROSE. But David will be coming back this evening if the wind holds. Surely you want the house gay for his coming? [*Touching the flowers lovingly.*] It's a wife's place to make her house as pretty as she can for her man.

JINNY. [*Leaning over the table.*] Pretty? Girl, d' y' know what flowers 're for?

ROSE. [*She laughs a little nervously.*] Why . . .

JINNY. Flowers is for . . . funerals.

ROSE. [*She looks up and sees* JINNY'S *face.*] Oh . . . I . . . didn't know . . . [*She turns and hurries out of the room.*]

GRANNY. It's bad luck her flowers will bring upon our house 'n' upon all of us. [*She begins to rock and croon again.*]

JINNY. Hush, mother. [ROSE *returns empty-handed.*] Where's th' wood y' went after more'n an hour ago?

ROSE. Wood? Oh, I . . . I forgot. I saw the flowers beyond the dunes. They drove everything else out of my head.

JINNY. It's like y' t' forget when there's work t' be done.

ROSE. [*Starting toward the door.*] I'll go get it now.

JINNY. [*Lifting her hand.*] Stay where y' be. [*She goes*

to the door, takes down her knitted shawl and folds it over her head.] I couldn't trust y' again. Y'd be off gaddin' with th' gulls.

[*She throws open the door and goes out.* ROSE *moves away to the chest, lifts the top, takes out a little basket of sewing, drops the heavy lid of the chest and sinks down on it. With her cheek against the window pane she sits for a time staring out across the wharf to the sea beyond.*]

ROSE. You're sure the Carrie Lee'll bring my man home to us tonight, Granny?

GRANNY. [*Coming out of her reverie.*] Eh?

ROSE. [*Hopefully.*] You think David'll be home tonight?

GRANNY. [*Shaking her head.*] Y' never can tell about that old woman sea, girl, y' never can tell.

ROSE. But the fleet was sighted to the north three days ago.

GRANNY. Th' wind 'n' th' tide sets strong for home t'night but . . .

ROSE. [*Picking up her sewing.*] I wish I understood those things the way you do, Granny.

GRANNY. I was th' wife of a seafarin' man. When th' heart bids y' watch th' tides 'n' wind, y' learn.

[*The room is gradually growing darker.* JINNY *enters from the back with an armful of wood.*]

ROSE. Any news of the fleet yet?

JINNY. [*Crossing to the wood box where she drops the*

wood.] No . . . no news. [*She moves back to the table.*] What's that y' got?

ROSE. [*Without looking up.*] Just a bit of sewing.

JINNY. Leave be. It's no time t' be ruinin' your eyes embroiderin' things by this poor light . . . besides, there's work t' be done.

ROSE. [*Folding away her sewing.*] There's *always* work to be done.

JINNY. [*Petulantly*]. Why was it y' married David? Was it t' sit in idleness y' thought y'd spend th' days while his mother worked her fingers t' th' bone? What call has an inlander t' marry a seafarin' man?

ROSE. [*Simply.*] I married David because I love him.

JINNY. [*Busy over the things on the table.*] Love! Huh. What d' you know about love? Wait till you've borne a son 'n' watched him grow up from a scantlin', so high, to a broad-shouldered, straight-standin', God-fearin' man. Wait till you've nursed him through gurry sores 'n' 'monia 'n' all th' rest of it. Ever since I can remember I been a hard-workin' woman without complaint but it seems too much when th' only son left brings home a stranger t' sit over me in my own house!

ROSE. I've tried to do my best.

JINNY. Maybe . . . but what do inlanders know about th' ways of us who live by the sea?

GRANNY. [*Moving restlessly in her chair.*] You've no right t' be talkin' again' her that way!

JINNY. Why ain't I? [*Her anger grows.*] It's sick I am of it all. What have I ever had of life but work 'n' bearin' children 'n' waitin' 'n' waitin' for th' men t' come home? What have I got t' look forward to now?

[*There is a long pause, the wash of a wave is heard again.*]

GRANNY. [*Who has begun her rocking again.*] Th' Merilla on th' reef, lost with all hands on board.

ROSE. What's she sayin'?

JINNY. She's rememberin' th' ships that went down.

GRANNY. [*In an even, monotonous tone.*] Th' Jennie Jones 'n' Skipper Marken . . . 'n' him with wife 'n' child.

ROSE. [*Frightened.*] Why . . . why does she look like that? She's never been so before.

JINNY. It takes her like that sometimes . . . when th' men come home from fishin'. She's an old woman now—but she were a grand one in her day. There weren't no girl hereabouts like her. [*The wash of a wave is heard.*] Now she's just a mumbling old woman, sittin' before the fire, watchin' th' dead that have gone before her. That's what we're comin' to, all of us.

ROSE. All of us? No . . . no!

JINNY. [*Nodding.*] Y' can't know till y've lived through it, what th' sea can do to us. We was all like you once. [*Nodding toward the old woman.*] She was 'n' I was. A bride, pink 'n' pretty. But the sea bleaches us like sea weed . . . Your dreams go—'n' your beauty goes with it while y' sit there starin' out o' th' window waitin' for your man t' come home on th' tide. Then one day, he

don't come back . . . oh, a house without a man in it is an empty place.

ROSE. What are you saying!

JINNY. The fleet comes in . . . 'n' your man's name is called on the wharf.

ROSE. [*Wide-eyed.*] Called on the wharf? What do you mean?

GRANNY. Swabber Jenks 'n' th' crew o' th' Monsoon . . . Peter Clark 'n' Joshua Lang . . . Luke Crump 'n' th' Christopher Swanson . . . lost with all hands on board.

JINNY. She remembers 'em all. It's *so* they call out th' missin' . . . call th' missin' on th' wharf when th' men come in from th' haul.

ROSE. The missing . . . you mean—

JINNY. I mean up there where th' men go there's reefs 'n' there's fog, thick as night. There's icebergs t' run into 'n' storms that fair tear th' sails t' ribbons . . . for ten boats that go out there's seven come back t' th' women waitin' on th' wharves.

ROSE. [*She presses her hands tightly against her lips to hold back a frightened scream.*] Why are you telling me all this now? Have you heard something . . . has some news come—

JINNY. [*Shaking her head.*] No. I'm just sayin' out loud th' things that have been goin' over 'n' over 'n' over in my head for five days, ever since th' storm, because I can't keep 'em in no longer. I've got t' talk out loud!

ROSE. You mean that maybe the Carrie Lee won't come back . . . that David—

GRANNY. Skipper West 'n' First Mate Skinner . . . 'n' him with wife 'n' child!

ROSE. [*Terrified.*] Stop her! Stop her!

JINNY. Let her be, poor soul. Have y' ground th' knives yet?

ROSE. [*Shaking her head.*] No. I'll do it now.

[*She moves over to the table, takes up several knives and starts across the room.*]

JINNY. They've got t' be ground come night. They'll be a hantle o' fish t' split . . . th' wind's set strong for more'n twelve hours so they won't have done it aboard.

ROSE. [*As she passes the window toward the grindstone she lifts her head and looks off into the distance dreamily.*] The trees would be green at home tonight and my mother would be looking out the windows waiting for my father to come home from his work in the fields.

GRANNY. A gray wave caught 'em amidship 'n' they was all lost at sea.

JINNY. Hush . . . hush.

ROSE. [*Half to herself as she sits down to her work.*] Oh, I'm sick for the sight of green, growing things.

JINNY. There's knives to be sharpened.

ROSE. [*Turning the wheel.*] Yes . . . yes.

[*There is a moment of silence then from afar comes the low moan of a fog horn.*]

JINNY. [*Looking up with haunted, tired eyes.*] Fog's comin' up again. I'd best get some more wood.

[*She turns, takes down her shawl and hurries out the door, back.* ROSE *goes on with her work in silence for a moment, then lays down her knife, rises and moves to the fire to warm her hands.*]

GRANNY. [*Waking with a start.*] That you, Rose? I just dozed off.

ROSE. You've been saying such strange things, Granny.

GRANNY. Old women like me are full o' sleep. What was it I said?

ROSE. Things . . . things about ships that went down at sea . . . and the dead they called on the wharf.

GRANNY. [*Shaking her head.*] An' what else would an old woman have t' talk about but her dead? As fine a man as ever stood before th' mast I had, two sons 'n' three fine grandsons. But they're all gone 'cept David. Ah, there's little more th' sea can do t' me now.

ROSE. [*She crosses to the window.*] I wish David would come!

GRANNY. [*Nodding.*] Young blood calls t' young . . . 'tain't David can give y' happiness now . . . but a little fellow stumblin' about th' hearth. I've had two sons in my time. I know, child, I know. It's th' little ones that fill the great empty place left in a woman's heart when her man goes off t' sea.

ROSE. [*She picks up her sewing basket, carries it to* GRANNY

and sinks down on her knees before the old woman.] Granny, I . . . I wanted to show you this.

[*She spreads a tiny garment out on the old woman's knees.*]

GRANNY. [*Smoothing the little white thing lovingly with her fingers.*] I'll be glad when it comes. We've had no child in this house for twenty years. I'll be glad when it comes.

[*Rose lays her head in the old woman's lap,* GRANNY *strokes her hair.*]

GRANNY. Have you told *her* yet?

ROSE. [*Shaking her head.*] No . . . I'm afraid.

GRANNY. Best wait a bit. She's a hard woman. Life has roughed her.

ROSE. [*Gathering up her things and rising.*] I hear her coming now.

[JINNY *enters from the back with a large armful of wood. She lets it fall behind the door, then removes the knitted shawl from her head.*]

JINNY. Tide's settin' strong . . . there's a hantle o' wood in th' drift.

[*She takes up a piece of wood and carries it to the fire, as she does so she sees* ROSE *moving toward the chest at the back with her sewing.*]

JINNY. [*Over her shoulder.*] The knives ground yet?

ROSE. [*Shaking her head.*] I haven't finished all of them yet.

JINNY. Sewing again? Ain't y' heard me tell y' t' put it by when there's work t' be done? [*Holding out her hand.*] Give here!

ROSE. [*Putting the work behind her.*] You don't know what it is!

JINNY. [*Her hand still outstretched.*] I don't want t' know! Y' ain't got time for sittin' 'n' sewin' fancy work when there's wood t' be brought, pans t' be washed, knives t' be ground—against th' time when th' fleet get in. Give it here, I say. [*She moves toward the girl threateningly.*]

ROSE. [*Half hysterically.*] Don't you dare touch it! Don't you dare!

[*From outside comes a long call followed by the sound of excited voices.* JINNY *drops her hand.* ROSE *turns and hurries to the window at the back.* GRANNY *straightens and sits looking into space.*]

JINNY. Must be th' fleet.

ROSE. Yes, it's the boats . . . they're rounding the point.

JINNY. I wonder they came that way with th' fog so thick.

GRANNY. [*Lifting her head.*] They'll be some missin'.

ROSE. [*Her hands against the window pane, her eyes filled with tears.*] Oh, David . . . David!

JINNY. [*Looking out over the girl's shoulder.*] There's th' Boundin' Lass 'n' th' Kelpie, with th' Shadow in th' lea o' 't.

ROSE. Where's David's boat? Where's the Carrie Lee?

JINNY. There's more t' come, child . . . there's *more* t' come.

ROSE. [*With a little catch in her breath.*] There it is out seaward . . . I can see the light on the sail.

JINNY. Yes . . . Yes . . . No . . . 't's Ben Keeney in th' Sarah—

ROSE. [*Excitedly.*] There's two out there . . . just coming around now, see?

JINNY. Th' Storm 'n' th' Nancy—'n' one more. Ah . . . there . . . with th' jib boom—

[*She leans closer to the window. There is a moment of tense silence, then she slowly turns away. There is upon her face a look of abject horror as she clutches at her heart helplessly.*]

ROSE. [*Instinctively feeling the terror of the other woman.*] What is it . . . what is it?

JINNY. 'T's Sam Crosby's Gallant. She's allus th' last o' the fleet.

ROSE. There's . . . there's no more coming around the point? [*Hopefully.*] But maybe . . . maybe—

JINNY. [*Moving toward the table. She reaches out for the back of the chair and leans against it.*] Th' fleet's in, girl . . . th' fleet's in . . . 'n' th' Carrie Lee— [*She shakes her head.*] Th' Carrie Lee—

ROSE. [*Springing to her feet.*] I'm going to the wharf!

JINNY. [*She moves toward the door.*] You'll stay where y' be! Wait!

[*She grabs down her knitted shawl, throws it over her head and rushes out, slamming the door behind her.*]

ROSE. They're all in the cove . . . all of them . . . and the Carrie Lee isn't there . . . she's not back with the other ships. [*Moving toward Granny.*] Could it be the Carrie Lee stayed behind?

GRANNY. [*Soothingly.*] Yes, yes, girl— Sometimes they stay behind.

ROSE. He'll be sailing in tonight . . . after the fog has lifted.

GRANNY. [*She begins her rocking again and mumbles.*] Come early . . . come late . . . 't's always the same. [*She half rises from her chair then sinks back into it again helplessly.*] It's that old woman sea that takes our men from us!

ROSE. [*She climbs up on the chest and kneels there looking out the window.*] They've beached the boat from the Shadow and they're crowding on the wharf.

GRANNY. They'll be callin' th' missin' now.

ROSE. My man must be there . . . he must!

GRANNY. [*Half aloud.*] An' him with wife 'n' child.

ROSE. What's that you say, Granny?

GRANNY. [*Lifting her head.*] Eh, girl?

ROSE. What was it you said?

GRANNY. Nothin' . . . nothin' . . . Jinny there?

ROSE. She's coming up this way now . . . carrying something.

[*The door at the back slowly opens and* JINNY *enters. The color has gone from her face, in her eyes is a frightened, half-haunted look. She moves to the table and lays down her bundle—an old sweater tied at the ends.*]

ROSE. Tell me! Tell me!

JINNY. [*The knitted shawl slips from her shoulders to the floor where it lies unnoticed.*] That's all that's left of him now . . . all that's left. [*Monotonously.*] Th' Carrie Lee on Lighthouse Reef . . . lost with all hands on board.

[*Rose stands for a moment dry-eyed, unable to believe what she has heard, then slowly she turns, moves back to the chest and lifts from her basket the little white dress upon which she has been working.*]

ROSE. David . . . David— [*She buries her face and weeps bitterly.*]

JINNY. [*In a whisper.*] David, my son . . .

GRANNY. Th' Carrie Lee with Skipper Nelson . . . 'n' him with wife 'n' child.

JINNY. [*She lifts her head slowly and moves toward the window.*] They're all gone now. Forty year o' waitin' for th' men folk t' come in . . . forty year o' listenin' t' 'em down there callin' th' missin' on the wharf—[*Her hands drop helplessly to her side.*] An' all for this.

ROSE. David—

JINNY. [*She lays a hand on Rose's shoulder.*] Dry your eyes, girl. You're young yet. There's men will covet y' . . . but what's th' end for me? A house without men folk

'n' naught t' watch for when th' nights are stormy. What's for me? Alone in an empty house with only an old woman mumbling over her dead.

GRANNY. No . . . it's our livin' we'll be waitin' for now. You, me, 'n' th' girl there . . . it's our livin' we'll be waitin' for.

JINNY. [*To the old woman.*] Hush . . . what are you sayin'?

GRANNY. Tell her, girl . . . tell her.

ROSE. [*Spreading out the tiny white garment.*] It's this she means.

[JINNY *stares at it for a moment, stupidly, slowly her face brightens.*]

JINNY. He'll set this empty place ringin' with his laughter! [*She turns to the old woman in the shadows.*] D' y' hear? A man t' cook for 'n' watch over . . . a man t' pray for when th' storm's whippin' th' sea 'n' th' wind howls o' nights.

[*The wash of a wave is heard and, from afar, the low moan of a fog horn.*]

GRANNY. Hear that? It's th' old woman sea snatchin' at things . . . tryin' t' drag 'em down t' her . . . but some day a man will come t' beat her back . . . beat her back for all time!

ROSE. [*Her face turned to* JINNY.] I'm afraid. . . afraid.

JINNY. [*Her head thrown back, a new light in her tired*

eyes.] No . . . no, girl. There's nothin' t' fear. Twenty years from now we'll be watchin' th' windows here while *his* boat comes in from th' sea.

[*She puts both her arms about* ROSE. *Slowly, tenderly she draws the weeping girl to her as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

STORM

Copyright, 1928, by Florence Ryerson & Colin Clements.
Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

MAGGIE JORDAN.
JIM JORDAN.
WILL HARVEY.

STORM

SCENE: *The combined living room and kitchen of the Jordan shack on Sandy Neck. It is a stark, high-studded, wooden-walled room. The colored muslin curtains on either side of the window at the back, and the bright folded paper shade over the oil lamp on the table, which is in the center of the room, stand out against their drab background as forlorn attempts to make the place homelike. Close to the table is a ragged horsehair chair. A door at the right opens out onto a narrow porch which drops straight to the water. A door across from it, in the middle of the left wall, opens into another room of the house. In the left corner stands a cupboard and a small stove. In the right corner is a small table with pail and wash basin upon it; underneath is a pile of nets, old sail cloth, broken oars, and pieces of rope, iron and wood. The only other furniture in the room consists of two unpainted, straight-backed wooden chairs, one near the window at the back and the other near the outside door. The rough walls are unadorned save for a few colored pictures, evidently cut from magazine covers. They are, for the most part, pictures of flowers and trees.*

It is late evening of an October day. The low moan of the wind, mournful and menacing, is heard. Throughout

the play a flash of lightning now and then puts the shaded lamp on the table to shame.

When the curtain rises Maggie Jordon is standing near the window looking out across the water at the gathering storm. She is little more than a girl, beautiful in a haggard sort of way. Jim is seated near the table. He is a powerfully built Irishman, much older than his wife. He is unshaven and his black hair falls down over his low forehead in matted ringlets.

JIM. [*Finishing off a large glass of whisky from the table.*] Maggie . . . Maggie! [*She does not answer him, slowly he turns his head and looks at her in a drunken sort of way.*] Maggie, what y' doin'? [*Again there is no answer. He brings his fist down on the table with a bang.*] Hear me? Why don't y' answer? I'm askin' y' what you're doin'.

MAGGIE. [*Without turning her head.*] Can't y' see what I'm doin'? Lookin' out'n th' window.

JIM. Lookin' for somebody t' come? [*He waits a moment for her to answer him.*] I ast y' what y' was lookin' at.

MAGGIE. [*Brushing the hair back from her eyes.*] Nothin' . . . just watchin' th' storm risin'.

JIM. It'll blow over, like as not.

MAGGIE. [*Shaking her head.*] It's settin' in for th' night. When th' lightnin' flashes I can see th' willows down t' th' point doubled over t' th' ground. Wind's tearin' 'em t' shreds like as if they was rotten sail cloth. [*Half to herself.*] Wonder if a boat could put out in it?

JIM. Eh?

MAGGIE. Nothin' . . . I was just wonderin' if a boat could put out.

JIM. Nobody would go out a night like this less'n they was a damn fool . . . not with th' tide sweepin' in across th' Neck th' way she is. [*He shrugs his shoulders.*] Blow over by mornin', maybe.

[*The wash of rain is heard against the window at the back.*]

MAGGIE. [*Slowly she lets her hands fall with an air of resignation.*] Now it's beginnin' t' rain.

JIM. [*Moving in his chair restlessly.*] Why'n't y' do your work 'stead of standin' there complainin' 'bout th' storm?

MAGGIE. [*She moves to the table and begins to clear the dishes.*] Put on 'n' take off again . . . look, y' spilled somethin' all over that new lampshade. Can't keep nothin' purty in this house after you been in it five minutes.

JIM. Purty, eh? Want th' house all done up with them new-fangled lampshades 'n' whatnots like as if y' was a fancy woman, eh? Don't know where y' get all them ideas.

MAGGIE. [*Now near the cupboard.*] Every woman wants t' make her house purty.

JIM. [*Petulantly.*] Can't go makin' a fancy house out'n this place. Don't like it. S'pose y' get all them crazy ideas from lookin' in pitcher magazines. Well, them's for city

folks . . . not for th' likes of us. Y' didn't have no such notions when I married y'.

MAGGIE. [*Turning away from the cupboard.*] Married? What'd I know about bein' married . . . what'd I know about anythin' 'cept cookin' 'n' washin' 'n' tryin' t' keep a house clean? What'd I know about gettin' married 'cept what I heard you 'n' Pa talkin' with your dirty talk? I warn't nothin' but a kid. A woman changes when she gets older, Jim.

JIM. [*Who, has been taking off his shoes, stops and looks up suddenly.*] What y' mean?

MAGGIE. I mean after Pa died somethin' changed. I began t' find out things.

JIM. What kind of things?

MAGGIE. A woman don't have t' go drudgin' out her life for a man less'n she's a mind to it. No, she don't . . . less'n she loves him.

JIM. [*He tosses his shoes into a corner, then rises slowly.*] What's th' matter with you, eh?

MAGGIE. [*Shaking her head.*] Nothin's th' matter with me . . . I'm just tellin' y' I ain't a kid no longer. I'm a woman, Jim . . . 'n' I'm seein' things clear as clear. All my life I never knew what was right 'n' what was wrong . . . what was good 'n' what was bad. But I know now.

JIM. Nice kind of a wife you are for a man t' have.

MAGGIE. Maybe . . . but no matter how bad I am, I'm better'n you deserve.

JIM. What right y' got t' talk like that?

MAGGIE. I'm just speakin' truth . . . that's my right.

JIM. [*He leans across the table and leers at her.*] A wife ain't *got* no rights 'cept what her man has a mind t' give her.

MAGGIE. [*Straightening.*] Then I'll *take* 'em!

JIM. [*Turning away.*] Shut your mouth, woman . . . 'n' keep it shut!

MAGGIE. [*In an even tone.*] I said I'll take my rights, Jim. I mean it. I'm leavin' y'.

JIM. [*He turns and looks at her some time before he speaks.*] 'Tain't natural for you t' be talkin' like this. 'Tain't natural for a woman t' do nothin' less'n she has a man t' do it for her. [*Suddenly.*] Is it somebody here on Sandy Neck's puttin' them notions in your head?

MAGGIE. [*Proudly.*] Maybe.

JIM. [*Craftily.*] Aw . . . nobody'd want you.

MAGGIE. [*A sudden catch in her breath.*] You think so . . . eh? Well . . . you're a fool, Jim Jordan. Try as y' have t' beat me down . . . there's somebody has eyes for me.

JIM. Will Harvey! I mind th' way y' looked at him last night when he come t' borrow them nets. [*He moves toward her and takes the girl by the wrist.*] It's him, ain't it?

MAGGIE. [*Crying out in pain.*] You're hurtin' me, Jim.

JIM. 'T's him!

MAGGIE. [*Stubbornly, in spite of her pain.*] I ain't sayin'.

JIM. [*Throwing her out of his way.*] I ain't worried! You're my woman . . . 'n' I guess I can hold my own. [*His anger grows.*] Listen, if I ever catch y' carryin' on with Will Harvey or anybody else I'll do 'em in . . . break 'em across my knee like as if they was a piece of rotten driftwood. [*He moves toward the door.*] But I ain't fool enough t' take no chances, see?

MAGGIE. What y' mean?

JIM. [*Drunkenly.*] Maybe y' think I can't see things. After y' told me all that crazy stuff about wantin' t' get t' th' Mainland I began t' suspicion y'. A woman don't talk that way less'n she's hankerin' after somebody. Well, look . . . [*He throws open the door.*] I got a bolt on it, with a lock.

MAGGIE. Shut that door . . . look at th' rain drivin' in on my carpet.

JIM. [*Pushing the door shut.*] I ain't goin' t' have y' galavantin' 'round when I'm out fishin'!

MAGGIE. Goin' t' cage me up like I was an animal?

JIM. Yes, till y' get over them notions y' got in your head lately.

MAGGIE. Go on with your talk . . . I ain't afeared.

JIM. Aw, you're allus sayin' that. But y' can't do nothin'. Y' don't dast.

MAGGIE. Yes, I dast!

JIM. I'll learn y' some sense. I'll pen y' up till y' come t' your right mind.

[*He moves to the cupboard and from the lower part takes a half-filled whisky bottle.*]

MAGGIE. I'll get out! I tell y' I can't stand it . . . what chance any of us got down here?

JIM. [*Refilling his glass at the table.*] What y' talkin' about?

MAGGIE. There ain't no chance for any of us as long as we stay here. Oh, I ain't blamin' you for th' way y' are . . . maybe it's th' sea does it. I don't know . . . I don't know. It's got so I wake up in th' night . . . scared . . . 'fraid a wave is goin' t' smash against this house 'n' drag us down into th' water. [*She covered her face with her hands.*] Always washin' under y' till y' near go crazy with th' noise of it. I tell y' I can't stand it any longer!

JIM. [*He moves over to the chair near the table, sinks down into it and pours out a tall drink.*] Other women down here don't complain.

MAGGIE. Maybe they're afeared t' say what they think, afeared by th' beatin's they get . . . but I ain't afeared, now. I tell y' it's like th' storm outside . . . somethin' way down deep inside keeps apoundin' 'n' apoundin' till it breaks.

JIM. Aw, shut up.

MAGGIE. [*Turning toward the window.*] I got t' go . . . I got t'.

[*There is a long pause.* JIM *takes a drink, wipes his mouth*

with the back of his hand and sets down the glass. There is a terrific peal of thunder outside.]

JIM. Hear th' water smashin' 'gainst th' piles under th' house? That's your answer for all this fine talk about gettin' t' th' Mainland. Swell chance y' got of goin' anywhere on a night like this . . . even if it was calm y' wouldn't dast.

MAGGIE. I ain't afeared of no storm, I tell y'. I'm goin'!

JIM. [*Triumphantly.*] That proves what I been sayin'. There's a man somewheres . . . no woman'd try that passage 'thout a man. [*He laughs.*] Well . . . let him come . . . I'll be waitin' for 'im. I'll be waitin' t' welcome 'im. [*He looks at* MAGGIE.] Stop your idlin' 'n' get t' work. D'y' hear? [*He takes another drink and speaks with difficulty.*] Get t' work!

MAGGIE. [*Softly.*] What's th' use . . . what's th' use of anything . . . [*She stands for a moment uncertain which way to turn. There is another flash of lightning. The rain beats against the window and the wind howls around the door at the right. She steps to the window.*] Storm . . . storm . . . allus storm.

JIM. [*Thickly.*] Hear me? I said get t' work!

[*The girl moves to the cupboard, takes up a pan, then moves across the room and fills it from the pail on the table, right. She carries the pan back to the stove, then stops and looks at her husband.*]

MAGGIE. [*Very low.*] Dirty drunken sot.

JIM. [*His head falls forward; he mumbles drunkenly.*]

Slap it down there . . . bang th' door to . . . a heavy roll's comin' . . . she went over of a sudden . . . dark as hell . . . 'n' water pourin' in from everywhere . . . 'n' rats . . . rat bit my hand . . . heard somebody swimmin' down below me . . . thought they'd never come . . . thought they'd all gone overboard . . . couldn't hear nothin' but th' wind . . . just a gang of blinkin' fools . . . leavin' me t' drown . . . bah! [*He wakes suddenly.*] What th' hell . . .

MAGGIE. Best go t' bed. You're gettin' one of them spells again.

JIM. [*Lifting his head suddenly.*] Eh? Jus' . . . jus' dropped off.

MAGGIE. You'd best go t' bed afore y' knock th' lamp over 'n' burn down th' house.

[JIM *manages to get to his feet, stands leaning against the table a moment, then lurches toward the door, left.*]

JIM. Goin' t' bed.

[*He disappears through the door.* MAGGIE *waits a moment, then moves over and closes the door after him. She returns to the table, lifts the lamp and carries it to the window at the back, with her foot she moves a chair near the window and sets the lamp down on it. Then she hurries across the room, and with a furtive glance over her shoulder at the door, left, removes from under the pile of nets a small bundle. From a nail near the door she takes down her hat and a ragged coat. With these she moves back to the table. Above the noise of the storm a rap is heard at the door, right.* MAGGIE *waits. The rap*

is repeated. She turns down the lamp, replaces it on the table, moves to the door and opens it. The wind drives a sheet of rain sweeping across the floor. WILL HARVEY, *wearing a heavy oiled coat and waterproof hat, slips into the room. He is a man of about twenty-five, clean-shaven, more or less good-looking and well set up.*]

WILL. God, but it's blowy.

MAGGIE. [*Helping* WILL *off with his coat and hat which he lets slip through his hand to the floor.*] 'Tain't nothin' but th' tail of a storm out t' sea. It'll die down.

WILL. Die down . . . nothin'! 'T's a Sou'wester. Where's Jim? He ain't gone fishin' on a night like this?

MAGGIE. [*Shaking her head.*] No . . . [*She points toward the door, left.*] In there.

WILL. Drunk again?

MAGGIE. Un-huh. Let's not talk about him.

[*She reaches up her arms, puts them around* WILL'S *neck and kisses him.*]

WILL. [*Returning her kiss half-heartedly.*] You're sure he won't wake up? Y' shouldn't of let me come here like this with him in the house.

MAGGIE. [*Letting her arms fall.*] Y' ain't afeared?

WILL. [*Straightening.*] Naw. 'Course not! But . . . but, maybe he'll hear us out here.

MAGGIE. Not with th' storm against th' roof like this. [*Her face brightens.*] It don't seem real, Will.

WILL. What don't?

MAGGIE. Us goin' away like this . . . us t'gether over there on th' Mainland. We'll find th' happiness God meant us t' have there, Will. It's like y' said it was, ain't it . . . all grass 'n' flowers 'n' trees . . . green things?

WILL. I told y' a hundred times how it was.

MAGGIE. We'll forget about all this . . . this ugly place . . . 'n' th' sea!

WILL. Maggie, sometimes y' make me feel 'tain't me y' care about . . . jus' gettin' away t' th' Mainland.

MAGGIE. You know that ain't so, Will.

WILL. [*Catching at her hand.*] I believe y', Maggie.

MAGGIE. I love y', Will . . . every bit of me. I love y' because you're you 'n' because . . . because you're th' only man here on Sandy Neck that ain't afeared of nothin'.

WILL. [*Cautiously taking a step toward the door, left.*] I ain't afeared of th' like of him, if that's what y' mean. [*His voice drops.*] But I don't like comin' here like this with him in th' house.

MAGGIE. Warn't no other way with th' storm comin' up all of a sudden. But it'll take more'n a storm t' keep us back, won't it? Nothin' can hold us now. [*She touches the bundle on the table.*] I got everything here . . . 'cept that lamp shade. [*She puts on her hat.*] Best hurry, it's past time for th' tide t' turn.

WILL. God! Y' don't mean y' expect t' try for th' Mainland t'night?

MAGGIE. Not try?

WILL. In a Sou'easter like this? 'Tain't a trip for a woman!

MAGGIE. Y' don't need t' think about me, Will. I ain't afeard with you!

WILL. We'd be drowned sure.

MAGGIE. We'd be drowned together then.

WILL. [*Pleadingly.*] Don't y' see, Maggie? It's you I'm thinkin' of.

MAGGIE. [*Rising slowly.*] A storm out there can't make me afeared. Besides . . . I'd rather be drowned than stay here with *him.* Come on.

WILL. 'Tain't no use your talkin', I ain't agoin'. [*There is a pause. The storm outside sounds more menacing.*] Hear that? It's too blowy, I tell y'. Th' tide's rushin' over th' rocks down at the Neck like somethin' out of hell. We'd be swamped sure. I ain't agoin' t'night.

MAGGIE. [*Sinking into chair.*] Y' ain't agoin'? Then Jim'll kill me sure.

WILL. Y' wasn't fool enough t' tell him we was goin'?

MAGGIE. Yes, I tol' him.

WILL. Y' damn fool . . . what made y' blab?

MAGGIE. I didn't want nobody sayin' we sneaked off. I didn't want people goin' 'round sayin' we was afeared. I didn't want 'em sayin' . . .

WILL. [*Snatching up the bundle from the table.*] Come on . . . let's get out of here. Quick. I reckon we can make

it. He's drunk enough so's he won't wake up till morning, ain't he?

MAGGIE. [*Dully.*] What y' doin'?

WILL. We got t' get out of this. We got t' get th' boat into th' channel 'fore th' tide's turned.

MAGGIE. Y' said a while ago y' wasn't goin'.

WILL. I didn't know you'd told him . . . y' fool! If he knows he'll kill me when he sobers up . . . he'll kill us both!

MAGGIE. No . . . he won't kill *you.*

WILL. What? [*In sudden hope.*] Y' mean y' didn't tell him . . . everythin'?

MAGGIE. What do you mean . . . everythin'?

WILL. I mean, 'bout us . . . us bein' lovers.

MAGGIE. No . . . I just told him I was leavin' for the Mainland. He suspicioned there was a man, but I didn't tell him nothin'.

WILL. [*Sagging in his relief.*] Thank God! Then we don't have t' go t'night.

MAGGIE. [*Whirling about.*] What d' y' mean?

WILL. If Jim don't know 't's me, we don't have t' go till th' storm's over. Come on . . . give us a kiss. I got t' be gettin' on. I don't want t' run th' chance of his catchin' me here like this.

MAGGIE. [*Looking at him with loathing.*] You . . . you're *afeared* of Jim!

WILL. Well . . . what if I am? He's a dangerous man . . . 'specially when he's been drinkin'.

MAGGIE. You'd leave me here t' face him . . . alone?

WILL. You can handle him, Maggie . . . like y' allus have. He's your man 'n' you can handle him.

MAGGIE. [*Crying out.*] Oh . . . what kind of feelin's has men folk got? What's a woman mean t' any of 'em?

WILL. Maggie . . . y'mean a lot t' me . . . but I can't face that Sou'easter . . . 'tain't in human nature 'n' there ain't no need I should face Jim.

MAGGIE. [*Suddenly flaring out.*] Well . . . you're goin' t' face him!

WILL. Goin' to? What y' mean?

MAGGIE. I mean y' ain't goin' t' sneak out like this . . . y' ain't goin' t' get out of it so easy. I was leavin' him 'n' goin' with you because I thought y' was th' better man of th' two. Now I ain't sure. I'm goin' t' keep you here, 'n' when he wakes up then I'll see! [*Her voice has risen until it is almost a scream.*]

JIM. [*From the next room.*] Maggie . . . Maggie!

WILL. Now you done it!

JIM. Who you talkin' t' out there?

WILL. He's rousin'. Let me out . . .

[*He starts for door.* MAGGIE *bars the way.*]

MAGGIE. No, y' don't, Will Harvey! You're goin' t' stay right here! You're goin' t' stay here 'n' face Jim!

WILL. [*Now frantic.*] Let me out . . . Let me out . . . I say!

[*There is a short tussle, but* MAGGIE *holds her ground.* JIM *appears at the inner door. He stands there for a moment blinking at the light.*]

JIM. What you doin' here, Will Harvey? [*He takes a step closer.*] I don't let no man come see my woman . . . y' understand? I don't let no man come sneakin' in t' see my woman.

MAGGIE. I ain't your woman!

JIM. What y' sayin'?

MAGGIE. I ain't your woman! I was leavin' y', Jim Jordan. Leavin' you for Will here.

WILL. Don't you believe her, Jim . . . she's lyin'.

MAGGIE. No . . . I ain't lyin'! I been lovin' him for months 'n' I was goin' away with him t' th' Mainland . . . where there's grass 'n' flowers. But I ain't goin'. Leastways not now . . . not till I find out which one o' you's th' better man.

JIM. Th' better man? [*He staggers a trifle.*] I be th' better man of course. I'm goin' t' kill him . . . snap him across my knee like that. [*He raises his knee, staggers again, and falls against the edge of the table.*] I'm goin' t' break every bone in his body . . . every bone . . . in his body . . . every . . . his body . . . [*Gradually his voice thickens, he drops into his chair near the window.*]

WILL. [*Laughing, shrill and triumphant.*] There's your man, Maggie! There's your better man!

MAGGIE. [*Staring at the two and talking to herself in a sort of repressed monotone.*] Rotten . . . Rotten . . . both of 'em. All my life . . . all my life I slaved for men. My pa . . . my husband and now you . . . you . . . and why? 'Cause men was better than women . . . 'cause they was stronger. And now they've all failed me . . . all of 'em. Rotten as driftwood when you lean on 'em. Rotten as driftwood. [*She comes to some sudden decision and raises her head.*] Well . . . I ain't goin' t' lean no more!

WILL. What you goin' t' do?

MAGGIE. I'm goin' t' th' Mainland . . . that's what. I'm goin' t' th' Mainland.

JIM. [*Pulling himself to his feet.*] The Mainland? Who you goin' with?

MAGGIE. I'm goin' alone! [*She is standing at the door. Both men turn and stare at her.*]

WILL AND JIM. [*Together.*] You shan't, I won't let you. You ain't goin'!

MAGGIE. I'm goin' t' th' Mainland and y' ain't strong enough to stop me! Neither of y'.

[*She throws the door open, the sudden draft blows out the lamp. The door slams after her and the heavy bolt is heard to fall.*

JIM. She's bolted th' door . . . on the outside . . .

WILL. [*Pounding on the door.*] Maggie . . . Maggie!

[JIM *stumbles across to the window. There is a sudden blinding flash of lightning.*]

JIM. She's loosenin' th' boat! She's shovin' off thro' th' surf! [*He lifts a chair and smashes the window panes.*] Maggie! Maggie! [*For a moment he leans out, then comes back into the room, his elbow before his eyes, as though to shut out some awful sight.*]

WILL. Where is she . . . now?

JIM. She's . . . she's gone. [*Suddenly he speaks through his teeth.*] Will Harvey, I'm goin' t' break you across my knee like y' was a piece of rotten driftwood!

[*There is another flash of lightning which shows* JIM *starting across the room toward the other man, he is carrying the heavy unlighted lamp as a weapon.* WILL *has swung a chair from the floor high over his head. Out of the darkness which follows the flash of lightning comes the sound of a crash, followed by an animal-like cry of pain. The storm outside breaks out anew and upon this*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

LETTERS

"Do right and fear no man. . . . Don't write and fear no woman."

Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

HELEN KANE, *Secretary to Mayor Whitney.*
PAMELA WHITNEY, *The Mayor's Wife.*
DOLLY DARLING, *Another woman.*

LETTERS

SCENE: *The office of Mayor Gordon Whitney has the usual complement of office furniture. A large desk for the Mayor is at the right. A smaller one for his secretary is at the left. At the back is a door. There are several glassed-in book shelves and a filing cabinet. To the left, and the right, hang campaign posters in red and blue: "Vote for Gordon Whitney." One displays a line drawing of the candidate, showing him as unusually young and undeniably good-looking. "Whitney for Clean Government" shouts the second, and, "Whitney for Mayor," shrieks the third with a picture, this time in profile.* HELEN *is working at her desk. The telephone rings and she ceases typing to lift the receiver from the hook.* HELEN *is young, intense and utterly devoid of humor.*

HELEN. Mayor's Office? Yes . . . no. This is his secretary speaking . . . Mayor Whitney is out. No, I'm sorry, I don't know when he'll be back. Very well . . . I'll teli him. [*She makes a note on her desk pad and resumes her typing. The telephone rings again.*] Mayor's office . . . Mayor's secretary speaking. No . . . Mayor Whitney is out . . .

[PAMELA *enters. She is a delightful person in her early thirties. She is dressed in a tailored suit and carries a bead bag which is stuffed much too full. There is a breezy*

humorousness about her which instantly envelopes the office.]

PAMELA. Hello there.

HELEN. [*Nodding to* PAMELA, *then speaking into the telephone.*] No . . . I don't know when Mr. Whitney will be back. If you'll leave your number . . . very well, goodbye.

PAMELA. So my husband is out?

HELEN. [*She rises and stands rather stiffly as though "at attention."*] Yes, Mrs. Whitney.

PAMELA. He's speaking again . . . or is it yet?

HELEN. [*Rather coldly.*] The Cosmic Club for lunch and the Sons of Toil this afternoon.

PAMELA. [*Removing her furs.*] That was a splendid speech he gave last night . . . simply splendid!

HELEN. [*She brightens.*] Oh . . . did you think so?

PAMELA. Yes, indeed. It's quite the best one you've written so far.

HELEN. [*Starting.*] Why . . . what . . . what do you mean?

PAMELA. You don't suppose for a minute I thought *he'd* written it?

HELEN. Really, Mrs. Whitney . . .

PAMELA. [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Oh . . . there's no secret about it, my dear. Men aren't so difficult to understand as they'd like to pretend. Besides, I know more

about my husband than most women do. You see, I used to be his secretary myself.

HELEN. You *were?* Why, I thought . . .

PAMELA. [*With a little wave of her hand.*] Yes, I know . . . I know. You believe I go in only for society. Heartless Bird of Paradise . . . take no real interest in his Higher Life. That's what you would think of me, naturally.

HELEN. Why should I think that?

PAMELA. Because that's the sort of thing Gordon would tell you. Bless you, child, I know that record . . . both sides of it. It's what *he* told me about his first wife.

HELEN. First wife?

PAMELA. Oh, yes, yes . . . just a social butterfly. No love. No understanding. No inspiration. She eloped with a deaf mute. I didn't understand why at the time . . . but, my dear, we live and learn. We live and learn. [*She moves to* HELEN'S *desk.*] But that's not what I came to talk about. How's the campaign coming?

HELEN. [*A trifle dazed.*] The campaign? Oh, splendidly, of course. Splendidly!

PAMELA. Lots of enthusiasm?

HELEN. [*Quite carried away.*] Yes! Yes! Such applause! And the women . . .

PAMELA. Oh, yes. He'd have the women's vote, of course. Bound to, with that head of hair. [*Waving toward post-*

ers.] Unless . . . [*She drops her voice and leans across the desk.*] Unless something happens.

HELEN. I don't believe I understand. What do you mean?

PAMELA. Quite frankly, I mean a last-minute scandal.

HELEN. What sort of scandal?

PAMELA. The usual thing. Women . . . love letters . . . mess in the papers. It's ruined many a man's career, my dear.

HELEN. That couldn't happen! Not with Gordon . . . I mean, Mayor Whitney.

PAMELA. Oh, couldn't it? Then you don't know Gordon. Let's see, how long have you been his secretary?

HELEN. Two months and three days.

PAMELA. It takes four months and six days before you *really* know him.

HELEN. [*Turning away.*] Oh!

PAMELA. Listen. I came down today to get your help. We've got to pull Gordon out of a mess.

HELEN. You don't mean . . . you can't mean a mess with a woman!

PAMELA. Bless you, that's just what I *do* mean. What other sort of mess is there for a man to get himself into?

HELEN. How do you know he's . . . in a mess . . . with a woman?

PAMELA. I found some letters.

HELEN. [*Swinging about.*] Letters? Where did you find them?

PAMELA. Under the paper in his bureau drawer. Yes, like every other man in the world he always keeps his love letters under the paper in his bureau drawer.

HELEN. You haven't found them before?

PAMELA. Lots and lots of times.

HELEN. I don't believe it. He couldn't be!

PAMELA. Couldn't be what?

HELEN. Like *that!*

PAMELA. [*Tugging at her bag.*] If you'd like to see them . . .

HELEN. He just couldn't be like that! He couldn't! He couldn't! He couldn't! You're just saying all this to frighten me.

PAMELA. You?

HELEN. Yes, me!

PAMELA. Why should I want to frighten you?

HELEN. [*Fiercely.*] Oh, what's the use of pretending any longer? I can see that you are trying to play with me . . . yes, *play* with me. The way a cat plays with a mouse! You know those letters to Gordon are from me!

PAMELA. From you?

HELEN. Yes, from me.

PAMELA. But, my dear girl . . .

HELEN. I love him and I'm proud of it! He needs me! I've been his inspiration through this campaign. I've stood back of him, urged him on to higher things . . . written his speeches . . .

PAMELA. There, there, dear, there's no use going on like this. You're sure . . . absolutely *sure* these letters are from you?

HELEN. Of *course* I'm sure. Who else would write them?

PAMELA. Oh, men, especially men in the public eye, meet so many women.

HELEN. I tell you I wrote those letters, Mrs. Whitney . . . every one of them.

PAMELA. [*Sitting down and fanning herself.*] Well, that certainly takes a load off my mind.

HELEN. What do you mean?

PAMELA. I was afraid they might be from somebody dangerous.

HELEN. [*Sinking into her chair.*] Don't you . . . don't you *care* when I tell you I love him and he . . . he loves me?

PAMELA. [*Patting the girl's hand consolingly.*] But he's always in love with his secretaries, dear. That's why they work so well.

HELEN. Mrs. Whitney, I . . . I think you're dreadful. Dreadful! You . . . who have the honor, the heavenly privilege of being married to a man like Gordon . . . and not even caring when you find you've lost him!

PAMELA. Lost him? Oh, I haven't lost him.

HELEN. Don't you understand ?

PAMELA. You mean about the letters?

HELEN. About everything! I tell you, I love him and he loves me. We should have told you before this. I wanted to tell but . . . but he couldn't bear to hurt you. Now that you know . . .

PAMELA. But I've always known. I knew the minute he stopped asking me to write his speeches and quit eating breakfast. He usually stops in to take you to the office and has a cup of coffee with you, doesn't he?

HELEN. [*Proudly.*] And a coddled egg.

PAMELA. It's such a comfort. I don't have to get up. Only, fry it occasionally, dear . . . the egg, I mean. He gets dreadfully tired of 'em coddled. And when he gets tired he'll go looking for someone else to call him "Sweet Papa."

HELEN. "Sweet Papa"! I *never* called him "Sweet Papa."

PAMELA. Oh, yes, you have . . . and "Snooky Ookums," too.

HELEN. Never . . . never . . . never! How could you accuse me of anything so vulgar?

PAMELA. [*Patting her bag.*] My dear, it's all right here in the letters. And you sign yourself his "only, lonely, baby doll."

HELEN. [*Working herself into a rage.*] I didn't! I didn't! I demand to *see* those letters.

PAMELA. [*Producing the packet from her bag.*] You're welcome, I'm sure. Here.

[HELEN *snatches them and tears one open.*]

HELEN. These . . . these aren't *my* letters!

PAMELA. [*Powdering her nose.*] Aren't they?

HELEN. No!

PAMELA. You know, I thought they weren't your style.

HELEN. But *whose* are they?

PAMELA. How should I know?

HELEN. [*Reading.*] "I lubes my smiley boy berry, berry muchums. I wants him to hold me tighty, tight." Oh! These are disgusting . . . disgusting! How could any woman bring herself to write such stuff as that? How could any man love a woman like that? How could he have anything to do with the creature? How could he get himself into a mess like this?

PAMELA. The important question is: How can he get *out* of it?

HELEN. I don't know! I don't care!

PAMELA. A woman who would write that sort of letters is dangerous . . . and with this campaign going on, well, you've simply got to pull him out of it somehow.

HELEN. I? *I* have? Do you think for a minute I'll do anything for him after this?

PAMELA. Why, yes . . . yes. I think you will.

HELEN. Well, I shan't. Never! Never!

PAMELA. I think you will . . . because, those weren't the *only* letters I found in his drawer.

HELEN. What . . . what do you mean?

PAMELA. [*Removing another small packet of letters from her bag.*] There's one in that package which begins: "My own boy, don't feel all blue and sad . . ."

HELEN. Mine!

PAMELA. Exactly.

HELEN. Oh, you . . . you cat!

PAMELA. If I were you I wouldn't waste time calling me names. That other woman might be here any minute.

HELEN. What woman?

PAMELA. Baby Doll.

HELEN. You don't mean she'd have the effrontery to come here?

PAMELA. Why not? Naturally, not being his secretary, when she wants to see him she must come here.

HELEN. How can you?

PAMELA. [*Making herself comfortable.*] What are you going to do to get rid of her?

HELEN. Do you think I'm going to soil myself by speaking to her? I tell you I'm not going to do anything.

PAMELA. [*Dangling the packet of letters.*] Oh, yes, you are . . . if you want these.

HELEN. What do you mean?

PAMELA. Look here, I'll sell your letters back to you. Do as I say and you shall have these letters as a reward.

HELEN. You mean . . . you mean you won't get a divorce?

PAMELA. Divorce? Bless you, no. There's something so dreadfully permanent about divorce.

HELEN. Then you'll give me back my letters?

PAMELA. I'll give them to you in return for those he wrote Baby Doll.

HELEN. You don't mean to tell me Gordon's been writing the creature?

PAMELA. Of course. That's the best thing he does—write.

HELEN. But how *can* I get them?

PAMELA. That's none of my business. Only . . . don't let her get away until *you* have the letters. I know she'll have them.

HELEN. But what makes you insist she's coming here?

PAMELA. [*Motioning toward the first packet of letters.*] It's all in there. She's coming here to sell his letters back to him.

HELEN. And you want *me,* to protect *your* husband?

PAMELA. But you love him . . . and he loves you.

HELEN. I don't.

PAMELA. If you value these . . . [*Again she dangles the letters toward* HELEN *who snatches at them.* PAMELA *tucks the letters back into her bag.*] No . . . get his first.

[*There is a small commotion at the door, back.*]

HELEN. [*Straightening suddenly.*] Oh, who's that?

[*The door is flung open and* DOLLY DARLING *blooms upon the threshold. She is blondined, permanently frizzled and aclink with cheap jewelry. Her clothes shriek aloud, in different keys.*]

DOLLY. Well! Howdy doody!

PAMELA. [*Cheerfully.*] How do you do?

HELEN. [*Turning away in disgust.*] Ugh!

DOLLY. Where's his nibs? I mean the main squeeze?

PAMELA. I'm afraid Mayor Whitney is out just now.

DOLLY. [*Flopping down into the nearest chair.*] I can wait.

HELEN. But you *can't* wait. He may be gone for hours and hours.

DOLLY. Oh, I don't mind, dearie. What's a couple of hours in my young life? What I have will keep.

[*She twirls a cheap bag on her finger. It is obviously stuffed with letters.* PAMELA *motions toward it and nods at* HELEN.]

HELEN. [*Nervously.*] Is there . . . is there anything I can attend to? I'm his secretary and take care of *all* his correspondence.

DOLLY. Well, you don't take care of this co-respondent, sister. [*She nods toward* PAMELA.] Who's that? Another one?

PAMELA. [*Smiling cheerfully.*] I'm Mrs. Whitney.

DOLLY. [*Whistling.*] Oh! His wife? I've heard a lot about you.

PAMELA. You would, of course.

DOLLY. What d' you mean, "of course"?

PAMELA. I mean, if you're a friend of my husband.

DOLLY. I don't know about that "friend" stuff. Perhaps I know him better than you think I do.

HELEN. [*To* PAMELA.] Oh, how *can* you sit there with her talking like that?

PAMELA. I? Why, it's none of my business. This is your affair.

DOLLY. You're his wife, ain't you?

PAMELA. Yes.

DOLLY. Then what's *she* got to do with it?

PAMELA. Oh, I'm only his wife.

DOLLY. H'm. I see.

PAMELA. [*Holding up her bag.*] We were just discussing some letters I found in my husband's drawer.

DOLLY. Oh! So *that's* your lay! I thought you looked like a wise bird. [*Defiantly.*] Well, what you going t' do about it?

PAMELA. I? Oh, nothing. I'm leaving it to Miss Kane, here.

DOLLY. Say. What d' you mean, you're "leaving it" t' Miss What-cha-ma-call-it?

PAMELA. She's going to get those letters from you. That is . . . you brought them, didn't you?

DOLLY. What else you think I'm here for? Sure, I brought 'em! [*To* HELEN.] How're you going t' get 'em, baby, huh?

HELEN. [*Wildly.*] Oh, I don't know! I don't know!

DOLLY. She's new at it, ain't she?

PAMELA. [*Nodding.*] Yes. She hasn't known Gordon very long.

DOLLY. I get you.

HELEN. [*To* PAMELA.] How can you demean yourself by talking to that woman?

DOLLY. [*Truculently.*] Look here! I won't have you calling me "that woman"! I'm a lady, see? [*Jumping to her feet.*] And if you don't believe it I'll scratch your eyes out!

HELEN. [*Rushing over to* PAMELA *for protection.*] Oh! Stop her! Stop her!

PAMELA. You two don't seem to be getting on.

HELEN. [*Under her breath.*] Perhaps I can appeal to her better nature . . . [*She turns to* DOLLY.] Look here, Miss —Miss—

DOLLY. Darling, baby. Dolly Darling . . . of the Beauty Burlesques. [*She pronounces the "ques."*]

HELEN. Miss Darling, Mrs. Whitney has told me that you have some letters written to you by the Mayor which—

DOLLY. She said a mouthful.

HELEN. And you threaten to use them against him in this campaign.

DOLLY. They're grand and usable. Want t' see 'em, baby?

HELEN. No . . . no! Surely if you ever had any regard for Mr. Whitney . . . if you ever loved him . . .

DOLLY. [*Using her lip stick.*] Who says I ever did? It was him done the loving . . . and how!

HELEN. But you can't want to ruin his career. I appeal to your better nature. To your womanly instincts . . .

DOLLY. [*Bored.*] Looky here, what is this? A revival meeting or something?

HELEN. [*Hopelessly sinking down into her chair.*] Oh, it's no use! I can't talk to that woman! I give up!

PAMELA. [*Picking* HELEN'S *letters up from the desk.*] If you're interested in letters, Miss Darling, perhaps you'd like to see these?

DOLLY. [*Suspiciously.*] What are they?

PAMELA. Some lovely letters written to my husband by a little friend of his. They're really worth reading . . . such passion, and yet such delicate restraint.

HELEN. [*Flinging herself on the letters.*] No! No! Wait! Don't show them to her! [*She turns to* DOLLY.] Won't anything make you give up Mayor Whitney's letters?

DOLLY. [*Calmly.*] Nothing you can say, baby.

HELEN. [*Desperately.*] Then I won't *say* it . . . I'll do

it! [*She rushes over to* DOLLY *and throws her into a chair.*] There! Now will you give them to me?

PAMELA. Look out! She'll scream!

HELEN. [*Panting.*] No, she won't! I'm choking her! Here! Tie her hands with my neck tie. [PAMELA *ties* DOLLY'S *hands.*] I'll put my scarf over her mouth. Unfasten her belt.

PAMELA. [*Admiringly.*] Gordon always said you were efficient!

HELEN. Oh, for heaven's sake stop talking and help me . . . help me! Here. [*Passing over the belt.*] Take that. Put it around the chair. Now she's safe!

PAMELA. Perfectly.

HELEN. [*Snatching the bag from* DOLLY *and handing it to* PAMELA.] There are your old letters. I hope you're satisfied!

PAMELA. [*Holding out a packet of letters.*] I suppose you want yours.

HELEN. [*Grabbing them.*] I've got *mine!* I'm going away where I'll never see you or that . . . that miserable philander again. [*She waves an arm toward the posters.*] You've certainly taught me something today, Mrs. Whitney.

PAMELA. [*Sweetly.*] More than you'll ever know, my dear . . . more than you'll ever know.

HELEN. [*Grabbing her coat and hat from behind the door.*] I wish you joy of him. I wish you *both* joy!

PAMELA. Just a moment.

HELEN. [*Turning at the door.*] Now what do you want?

PAMELA. I suppose my husband's letters *to you* are in the back compartment of the third drawer in your desk?

HELEN. [*A little bewildered.*] How did you know?

PAMELA. Oh, that's where I always kept them when I was his secretary.

HELEN. Oh! Oh!! Oh!!! [*She rushes out banging the door after her.* PAMELA *hurries over to* DOLLY *and unbinds her.*]

PAMELA. Are you all right?

DOLLY. Whew! Say, you didn't say anything about choking. That wasn't in our contract.

PAMELA. Sorry. I'll make it an extra ten if you like. [*She takes a number of bills from her bag and counts them into* DOLLY'S *outstretched hand.*] Ten—twenty—thirty-five.

DOLLY. [*Putting the money in her stocking.*] Thanks, an extra ten won't do me any harm. [*Shaking down her skirt, what there is of it.*] Say, was I all right?

PAMELA. Perfect! Would you be interested to stay and meet the Mayor?

DOLLY. Thanks, but I can't. Got to get back to rehearsal. [*She hurries toward the door, then turns.*] Besides, if he's what I think he is I'll meet him sooner or later.

[*The telephone rings.*]

PAMELA. Wait a minute! [*She picks up the receiver.*]

Mayor's office . . . no . . . he's out just now. [*Her hand over the telephone she speaks to* DOLLY.] Leave your address. I may need you again. [*Into the telephone.*] Yes. Yes . . . this is the Mayor's secretary speaking.

CURTAIN

A ROMANTIC INTERVAL

Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

DOROTHEA BENSON.
MORTIMER BENSON, *her husband.*

PLACE: *New York City.*
TIME: *Somewhere near midnight.*

A ROMANTIC INTERVAL

SCENE: *An hotel room. At the right is a narrow bed with a bright cover and piled with pillows. Near it stands a telephone table. At the foot of the bed, facing the audience, is a small divan. There is a large comfortable chair, left. There is a door, back, which opens into a hall. A large window at the left looks out upon the night. Near the chair stands an open steamer trunk and, behind it, half a dozen bags of various sizes. A writing table in the corner between the doors is piled high with flowers, fruit and bon bons.*

When the curtain rises Dorothea is propped up in the bed reading a magazine and nibbling at a bon bon. The telephone at her elbow rings. A frown crosses her face, she brushes back a wisp of hair from her eyes, and takes down the receiver.

DOROTHEA. [*Coldly.*] Hello. [*The moment she hears the voice at the other end she brightens.*] John! Oh, darling, darling, *darling* . . . I thought it was Mortimer. What? [*In a matter-of-fact tone.*] I just said, "darling, darling, darling, I thought you were my husband." Told him, dear? Why of course I've told him. I left a note on his chiffonier. I *always* leave it on his chiffonier. He'll find it when he gets home from the theatre. [*She hesitates a moment.*] Now . . . now . . . now, you sound so cross,

darling. Really a woman can't go running off to Italy, even with you, John, without leaving her husband *some* kind of a letter. Why of course I do, darling, but after all, dear, when a woman has been married as long as I have, especially to an actor, she can't help worrying about him a little, can she? What? Why of course I love you, darling. Ten minutes . . . I'll be ready. Goodbye, John . . . goodbye, Sweet. [*She looks at the telephone longingly, sets it down, suddenly remembers something and picks it up again.*] Hello, let me speak to the porter, please. [*She taps the telephone gaily as she waits.*] Hello, porter, this is Mrs. Benson speaking. Yes. Mrs. Mortimer Benson. Will you send up for my luggage? It's to go to Pier 5 . . . for the *Rochambeau* . . . right away. Thank you.

[*She hangs up the receiver and goes fluttering about the room. Suddenly she stops before the flowers and buries her face in the roses. There is a knock at the door.*]

DOROTHEA. [*Without looking up.*] Come in . . . [*The door is thrown open and a tall, handsome man appears in the doorway. He stands for a moment looking into the room.* DOROTHEA *raises her eyes. She is a bit startled but quickly recovers herself.*] You . . . Mortimer?

MORTIMER. [*With something of arrogance.*] Dorothea, what are you doing here?

DOROTHEA. [*A little frightened.*] Where?

MORTIMER. Here . . . in this hotel?

DOROTHEA. How did you know I was here?

MORTIMER. [*Getting chesty.*] As my wife you are one of

the most talked-of women in New York—naturally. No less than twenty people saw you register here . . . and wondered why. Five of them told me you were here even before I had taken off my makeup. [*With a gesture of helplessness.*] The other fifteen have probably told the newspapers. [*He takes out a watch.*] The early morning editions will, no doubt, carry the headline: "Mr. and Mrs. Mortimer Benson have separated."

DOROTHEA. [*Resolutely.*] We have.

MORTIMER. Again?

DOROTHEA. But I'm going through with it this time. Didn't you get my letter? I left it on your chiffonier.

MORTIMER. I haven't been home. I came here straight from the theatre.

DOROTHEA. [*A bit crestfallen.*] Didn't get my letter! And it was such a beautiful farewell . . . took me hours to write it. [*She turns on him.*] Mortimer, how could you come here and make a scene like this before you read my letter! It spoils everything.

MORTIMER. But I'm not making a scene.

DOROTHEA. You are.

MORTIMER. I am *not!*

DOROTHEA. Then you should be.

MORTIMER. This is all a lot of foolishness.

DOROTHEA. Foolishness? It is not.

MORTIMER. It is.

DOROTHEA. It is not.

MORTIMER. I say it *is!*

DOROTHEA. There . . . there. Don't shout at me! I can't stand it. [*She looks as if she might break into tears, then quickly dabs at her eyes with a little lace handkerchief.*] I'm so unstrung . . . all nerves . . . a woman can't go through what I'm going through without being unstrung.

MORTIMER. What, may I ask, are you going through?

DOROTHEA. [*A bit exasperated at her husband for not playing up better.*] I'm leaving you, Mortimer, for ever, and ever . . . and *ever.*

MORTIMER. Where is it this time? France or Italy? I advise Italy . . . it's particularly charming at this time of year.

DOROTHEA. [*Piqued.*] You don't act a bit sorry about losing me, Mortimer.

MORTIMER. [*After a pause.*] I've tried to be a good husband to you, Dorothea.

DOROTHEA. But a woman must have more than that . . . once in a while.

MORTIMER. For three years we have been happy together. You can't deny that I've lived for *you* alone.

DOROTHEA. [*She shrugs her shoulders.*] Hump . . . you lived for your public.

MORTIMER. There! I knew you never *really* understood me.

DOROTHEA. I do. I've always understood you. You're cold, Mortimer . . . cold. The more successful you became the

more we grew apart. Why, Mortimer, I don't think you've told me you loved me since goodness knows when. You're spoiled. Women flock about you . . . and tell you how wonderful you are . . . your eyes . . . your hair . . . your profile.

MORTIMER. My what?

DOROTHEA. Profile, darling. But nobody ever says a damn thing about *my* eyes, or *my* hair . . . or *my* profile. [*Her jaw sets.*] But, by jingo, somebody's going to or I'll know the reason why. [*With a sweeping gesture.*] Mortimer, the moment I closed the door of your house behind me today I felt like a new woman . . . free . . . free . . . free. Romance is calling and my whole heart cries out to answer that call. [*The little vixen has a lace handkerchief to her face and, unknown to him, is peeking through the lace at her husband.*] Oh, Mortimer . . . I *must* answer that call! [*To his everlasting shame, Mortimer lights a cigarette, moves away to the divan and, with his legs far apart, stands there blowing smoke rings into the air.*] Mortimer! You're not listening to a word I'm saying!

MORTIMER. [*Snapping out of it.*] I am, Dorothea, I am! But you've said all that so many times before.

DOROTHEA. Why, I never have!

MORTIMER. Yes, you have, dear.

DOROTHEA. Never!

MORTIMER. [*With a shrug.*] Oh, well . . .

DOROTHEA. [*Domestic creature.*] Besides that you're dropping ashes all over the rug.

MORTIMER. [*Sadly.*] It's only an hotel rug.

DOROTHEA. [*Sadly.*] It's the last rug we'll ever share together.

MORTIMER. [*Becoming the actor.*] Alas!

[*He covers his eyes with his hand and sinks down on the divan,* DOROTHEA *stares at him a moment.*]

DOROTHEA. Mortimer . . . is that a button off your cuff?

MORTIMER. [*Stuffing in his cuff.*] I'm afraid so, dear.

DOROTHEA. No button! [*She flies to the trunk, rumages around until she finds a small work basket, a button and a needle which she proceeds to thread as she talks.*] No button! You, the best-dressed actor in America without a button on your cuff! I knew something would happen to you the minute I left. Suppose a newspaper reporter should see you without a button . . . what do you suppose your public would say about *me?* What kind of a wife would they think I am?

MORTIMER. But you're not my wife any more.

DOROTHEA. I'd forgotten. [*Going on with her work.*] But, darling, after all, I'm your wife until we get the divorce.

MORTIMER. [*He pats his cuff affectionately.*] I shall keep this cuff forever . . . in memory of a last little act of affection.

DOROTHEA. [*She sighs deeply.*] A last little act of affection.

MORTIMER. [*After a pause.*] I shall miss you deeply, Dorothea.

DOROTHEA. [*Lightly.*] Will you, Mortimer?

MORTIMER. More than I can ever tell you.

DOROTHEA. I shall think of you, Mortimer . . . I shall think of you, now and then.

MORTIMER. [*Is he acting again?*] Little bird. [*He touches her hair lightly.*] Little bird, you shall go on singing in my heart—forever. Will you give me one parting kiss?

DOROTHEA. Parting kiss?

MORTIMER. It will be the last, you know.

DOROTHEA. Of course . . . I keep forgetting.

[MORTIMER *slips his arm around his wife and kisses her tenderly.*]

DOROTHEA. [*Glowing.*] You kiss divinely, Mortimer.

MORTIMER. [*Deeply.*] I shall die of loneliness when you are gone.

DOROTHEA. [*Slowly.*] Die? You almost make me wish I wasn't going away. Shall I change my mind, darling?

MORTIMER. [*Making the best of his moment.*] If it will make you happy I want you to go . . . though it break my heart. Give me your hand. Listen, and try to understand. [*She slips her hand into his.*] Ah, smile at me. When I let your hand go I shall hold your smile fast! Now, remember when this is past, the less we have the less we have lost. With life at its best I wanted you most. Life's over. I've loved you. Now go to your lover.

[*He rises majestically and strides over to the middle of the room.*]

DOROTHEA. [*When she has caught her breath.*] Too, too

wonderful! You make love divinely, Mortimer. [*She looks up suddenly.*] Why . . . why, that's from a play you did season before last. I remember it!

MORTIMER. Pretty, isn't it?

DOROTHEA. [*Hurt.*] Ever since I've known you, Mortimer, you've made second-hand love to me . . . thrown lines out of plays at me as if I were some silly simpering high-school girl in the front row. If only once you could tell me you love me and *mean* it!

MORTIMER. Perhaps *he* will be more original than I have been.

DOROTHEA. Well, if I do say . . . [*She stops suddenly. The corners of her mouth turn up into a knowing smile.*] Who?

MORTIMER. Who what?

DOROTHEA. Who will be more original than you?

MORTIMER. I don't know who he is . . . this new lover of yours.

DOROTHEA. [*In mock surprise.*] What new lover, darling?

MORTIMER. This man you're running away with to . . . to wherever you're running away with him to.

DOROTHEA. What makes you think there's anyone?

MORTIMER. Don't be silly, there's always a lover. Women don't just pack up and leave their husbands unless there is someone to leave them for.

DOROTHEA. [*Sweetly.*] Not this time, darling.

MORTIMER. [*Completely dumfounded.*] You can't mean you're going away *alone?*

DOROTHEA. [*Nodding.*] Alone.

MORTIMER. Don't lie to me, Dorothea. What's all that you just got through telling me about romance?

DOROTHEA. [*Thinking quickly.*] Did I say anything about romance? I must have been thinking about all those ruins and things over there. Ruins are so romantic . . . and Italy is practically covered with ruins, darling, from one end to the other. [*With a wave of her hand.*] Covered.

MORTIMER. [*He means it.*] Going to Italy alone . . . you're a fool!

DOROTHEA. I'm not so young as I once was, Mortimer.

MORTIMER. Nonsense. You don't look a day over eighteen.

DOROTHEA. [*Pleased.*] Don't I, Mortimer?

MORTIMER. [*Becoming more and more indignant.*] It's outrageous . . . preposterous. If you were going to leave me flat like this I think you might at least have been considerate enough to elope with someone . . . anyone! This will ruin me! [*He sinks into a chair limply.*] What do you suppose the newspapers are going to say?

DOROTHEA. I wonder . . . I wonder. But I hope they won't tell the whole truth . . . I couldn't wish you that, Mortimer.

MORTIMER. [*Weakly.*] The truth?

DOROTHEA. Yes. Oh, Mortimer, I hope the papers won't tell your public that Dorothea Benson is leaving her hus-

band because she is tired of hearing women rave about his wonderful profile everywhere she goes . . . because she's sick to death of answering piles and piles and piles of perfumed notes from love-sick girls . . . because her very fingers ache from signing his name across the bottom of that perfectly absurd photograph of her husband as Don Juan . . . taken fifteen years ago . . . because she is bored to death at the very thought of a theatre box every night, laughing and clapping at her husband's clever speeches, when she knows every one of the damned things backward.

MORTIMER. I . . . I thought you loved all those things.

DOROTHEA. Loved them? I hate them. Don't you suppose I want someone to tell me they love me once in a while? Well . . . I do. [*There is a rap at the door.* DOROTHEA *darts a glance at* MORTIMER *to see whether or not he has noticed. The rap is repeated.*] Um . . . did you hear a rap, Mortimer? [*She pauses another moment.*] Must have been plumbers or something. As I was saying . . . [*The rap is repeated.* DOROTHEA *calls out weakly:*] Come in.

[*Two men enter from the back. When* DOROTHEA *sees they have come for her baggage she sighs a sigh of relief and nods toward the trunks. Without a word the men go about gathering up the things.*]

DOROTHEA. [*Looking about the room.*] There's one bag missing . . . just a little one. [*To* MORTIMER.] You must be sitting on it, darling.

[MORTIMER *sheepishly produces a small bag which he hands to one of the porters. The men disappear into the*

hall. DOROTHEA *moves toward the divan where she sees her sewing basket.*]

MORTIMER. Well.

DOROTHEA. Goodness, I forgot to put in my sewing basket. [*With an histrionic gesture.*] I'll leave that behind for you, Mortimer. Just to . . . to remind you of me . . . now and then.

[*She moves across the room to the writing table and picks up her hat.*]

MORTIMER. Haven't you . . . haven't you anything to say to me, Dorothea?

DOROTHEA. [*She considers the question a moment.*] No . . . no . . . no, nothing.

MORTIMER. [*He rises.*] Then I have something to say to you. [*He moves toward her.*] Dorothea, you're a little devil . . . you've always been a little devil . . . but I adore you. I love you . . . love you . . . love you.

DOROTHEA What play is that from?

MORTIMER. [*Humbled.*] It's not from a play, dear. It's a little thing you taught me to say, long ago. I've never forgotten it, Dorothea . . . and I never will.

DOROTHEA. Why, why . . . you sound . . . you sound as if you really meant it!

MORTIMER. [*Gathering her into his arms.*] I *do* mean it, Dorothea. Oh, I *do* mean it.

DOROTHEA. [*Looking at him out of the corner of her eye, enjoying the situation immensely.*] Go on . . .

[MORTIMER *opens his mouth but just then the telephone rings.* DOROTHEA *darts a look at* MORTIMER *then rushes to the telephone.*]

DOROTHEA. [*She has some difficulty in speaking.*] He—hello. W—who? [*She covers the mouthpiece with her hand.*] I—It's John Taylor. Downstairs.

MORTIMER. John Taylor! What's he want?

DOROTHEA. [*Into the telephone.*] W—W—What's he want? Oh— [*She covers the mouthpiece with her hand.*] Isn't that funny? Isn't that *funny?* He wants to see me.

MORTIMER. [*Pulling himself together.*] I'll talk to him.

DOROTHEA. Oh, no, Mortimer . . . I mean, it's *me* he wants to talk to.

[*A knowing look has come into* MORTIMER'S *face. He moves over to the table and takes the telephone from* DOROTHEA'S *hand.*]

MORTIMER. Hello. Mr. Benson speaking . . . Just tell Mr. Taylor that Mr. and Mrs. Benson have gone to bed.

[*He hangs up the receiver with a bang.*]

[DOROTHEA *smiles to herself and looks up at her husband with admiration as the curtain falls.*]

LOVE IS LIKE THAT

Copyright, 1928, by Samuel French.

CHARACTERS

GRANNY.
DAPHNE DODD.
MRS. DODD.

LOVE IS LIKE THAT

SCENE: *The curtain rises on* DAPHNE'S *room. It is a pleasant place in bright cretonne and painted furniture. A curtained door at the back leads into her bed-room; a second door, at the right, opens into a hall. Near this door stands a small desk with a telephone. In the left wall is a large square window.*

The other furniture in the room consists of: a table, near the center, a comfortable armchair and a small divan, in the corner nearest the window at the left.

When the curtain rises, GRANNY, *a brisk old lady of seventy, is busily engaged in picking up shoes, stockings and clothing which have been strewn from one end of the room to the other. Just as she has picked up the last garment and is about to disappear into the room at the back, the telephone rings. With a sigh she retraces her steps, puts down the clothes and takes up the receiver.*

GRANNY. Drat that telephone . . . flummoxy things. Hello . . . hello . . . Oh, hello, Mr. Bristle. No, Daphne isn't here. Wait a minute . . . wait a minute. I think I hear her coming.

[*There is a sound without of whistling and running feet.* DAPHNE *bursts into the room from the hall. She is the perfect type of modern minx, never still for a moment. Just now she is carrying several large bundles and a gay colored*

handbag. She is wearing a coat, hat and fur. As she enters the room she dumps her bundles on the table, tosses her bag at the divan and sends her hat flying after it.]

DAPHNE. Hello, Granny! How's the old darling? [*She sheds her fur, her gloves, her coat and drops them any place handy.*]

GRANNY. Daffy . . . wait a minute!

DAPHNE. Can't. Gotta shift the scenery 'n' keep a date.

[*She continues the amazing performance of shedding her clothes, talking steadily. She is unbuttoning her dress at the neck and, at the same time, kicking off her shoes which fly through the air at wide angles.*]

GRANNY. Daffy, listen to me!

DAPHNE. Shopping . . . shopping . . . shopping. New hats. New shoes. Bags to match. Millions of new dresses . . . every color under the sun. Shopping morning, noon and night . . . just because Mother thinks I need new clothes. And there's no arguing with her. Think she'd see I'm sick and tired of new clothes. Gee, I'd like a little time off just to have a chance to wear some of those new things once in awhile.

GRANNY. Daphne . . . the telephone. Somebody wants to talk to you.

DAPHNE. Don't bother me now. Tell 'em to call later. Tell 'em anything you like. I've got enough to worry me with Mother fitting things on me all over the place. I feel just like an overhung Christmas tree. Wasting the whole blessed day when I might have been playing tennis.

[*She has progressed as far as the door at the back, hopping along on one leg while she removes a stocking from the other. There is every indication that if she doesn't get into the other room soon she will remove still more.*]

GRANNY. Now, Daffy—

DAPHNE. Clothes . . . what are they good for anyhow? I hate the stuffy, choky things. [*She hurls the stocking from her and, bending over, reaches for the hem of her skirt. With one lithe movement she pulls the thing over her head and appears in a slip. Whirling the dress like a flag of defiance she lets it fly through the air.*] Damn clothes!

[*With that she disappears into the dressing room.* GRANNY *stands staring after her a moment, then remembers the telephone in her hand.*]

GRANNY. Hello . . . are you still there? I'm afraid I was mistaken. Perhaps if you call a little later. Goodbye . . . Goodbye.

[*She hangs up the receiver and replaces the telephone on the desk.* DAPHNE *sticks her head through the curtains. By their violent agitation we know that she is dressing behind them.*]

DAPHNE. Aren't you ashamed, lying like that, Granny?

GRANNY. [*Shaking her head.*] I am not ashamed. It was just a little white lie and a little *white* lie never hurt anybody.

DAPHNE. Well, who were you white-lying to this time?

GRANNY. Mr. Bristle.

DAPHNE. Bristle? Good Heavens! Can't he ever let me alone?

GRANNY. [*Slyly.*] Maybe he wants to ask you to marry him or something.

DAPHNE. Probably. He proposes more than any man I ever met in my life.

GRANNY. Lately?

DAPHNE. [*Nodding.*] Last night was the last time. I haven't seen him since then. Why . . . it isn't decent for him to start right in telephoning again as soon as this.

GRANNY. Men in love are just like steam engines . . . they have to let off steam every so often or they blow up.

DAPHNE. I s'pose so. Throw me my pink negligee, will you, Granny? I think it's behind the sofa.

GRANNY. [*Crossing the room and picking up the negligee.*] No, it isn't, that's the red one. There it is, way over there under the desk. [*She gets it and hands it to* DAPHNE.]

DAPHNE. Thanks, old darling.

[*She takes the negligee and disappears behind the curtains.*]

GRANNY. [*Once more gathering up clothes.*] Beats me how you can possibly spread things around like this. In my day girls had two dresses for week days and one to go to church and funerals in. [*The telephone rings.*] Drat that thing! [*She lays down the clothes and moves to the telephone.*] Hello . . . hello. I'll see if she's in. [She *raises her voice and calls.*] Daphne . . . *Daphne.*

[DAPHNE *appears at the door in her negligee, her hair towsled.*]

DAPHNE. Who is it?

GRANNY. It's him.

DAPHNE. Which one.

GRANNY. That Bristle again.

DAPHNE. Tell him I'm not in yet. Tell him I'm just going out. Oh, tell the old idiot anything.

GRANNY. [*Slightly flustered.*] I'm sorry, Mr. Bristle, but Daphne's not come in yet . . . and besides she's just going out. [*She listens a moment.*] H'm . . . he seems to have hung up. In my day young men weren't so rude. They used to wait in our garden half a day just to talk with *me*.

DAPHNE. Why doesn't that old fossil devote himself to Mother? She's nearer his age than I am.

GRANNY. Well, from all I can see, the older men get the younger they like 'em.

DAPHNE. Why doesn't he play with somebody his own age?

GRANNY. Like me, eh?

DAPHNE. Nonsense, Granny, you're *much* too young for him.

GRANNY. I will say I could dance with the best of them in my day.

DAPHNE. Listen, Granny, when you and I want antiques

we'll dig for them in Egypt. [*She begins to brush her hair, and then suddenly sees something on the table.*] What's this?

GRANNY. Oh, I forgot to tell you, some flowers. They came while you were out.

DAPHNE. [*Grabbing up the flowers.*] Who from?

GRANNY. I don't know . . . but I can guess. There's a poem with 'em.

DAPHNE. Lane! The darling! He always sends poetry. [*She rips off the paper.*] Red roses! I adore red roses. Aren't they lovely? Look!

GRANNY. Lovely . . . simply lovely. In my day when a girl got a bouquet of *red* roses she counted it the same as a proposal.

DAPHNE. [*Laughing.*] Here . . . smell them! Where's the poem?

GRANNY. [*Quickly.*] In the envelope tied to the stems. I thought it was a bill and opened it. But I didn't read it . . . honest, I didn't.

DAPHNE. I'll read it to you. [*She opens the paper and reads.*]

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies:
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

GRANNY. H'm.

DAPHNE. [*Her eyes shining.*] Isn't that beautiful, Granny? Isn't that just perfectly beautiful?

GRANNY. Beautiful . . . did he write it? That Lane boy, I mean?

DAPHNE. Why, of course he wrote it. Why . . . why, I don't believe there's anyone else in this country could write anything half as good as that.

GRANNY. [*Knowingly.*] Well, I should say not.

DAPHNE. I honestly think it's just about the loveliest thing I ever heard. Let me read it to you again, Granny.

GRANNY. Go ahead. There's nothing I like better than poetry . . . when it's good.

DAPHNE. [*Reading.*]

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and . . ."

GRANNY. Sh-h-h. Here's your mother.

DAPHNE. Oh!

[*She sticks the poem in the front of her negligee and tries to hide the box of roses, then begins to brush her hair vigorously.* MRS. DODD *enters from the hall. She is dressed in an evening dress and cloak.* MRS. DODD *is a somewhat artificial, dissatisfied woman of the world.*]

MRS. DODD. Daphne! Aren't you dressed for dinner yet? What *have* you been doing?

DAPHNE. [*Sweetly.*] Dressing.

MRS. DODD. We'll be fearfully late.

DAPHNE. We? But I'm not going to dinner with you, Mother.

MRS. DODD. Where are you going, may I ask?

DAPHNE. I'm going down to the *Black Cat* with Lane Bryson. He asked me weeks and weeks and *weeks* ago.

MRS. DODD. [*Moving to the center of the room.*] My dear, you are not having dinner at the *Black Cat* or any other color cat with Lane Bryson. You are having dinner with Mr. Bristle and me. We are going on to the theatre afterward.

DAPHNE. Mother, I can't . . . I simply can't. He . . . he proposed to me again last night and . . . I . . . I said *No*. I can't possibly face him now. It isn't decent!

MRS. DODD. Nonsense. He understands perfectly. I daresay he's been turned down before. Besides, I explained *everything* perfectly. I told him it was only a little shyness on your part. He's been trying to get you on the telephone all afternoon. Now hurry and dress. He'll be here any minute.

DAPHNE. I won't! Mother, you're simply throwing me at that man's head and I won't be treated as if I were a bean bag!

MRS. DODD. My dear, how can you talk that way? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

DAPHNE. No, I'm not! I tell you I won't go to dinner with that wet smack! I'm going to dinner with Lane . . . and after dinner we are going to walk on the beach.

MRS. DODD. It's likely I'd let a daughter of mine go to the beach with a young nobody . . . a young nobody who writes poetry for the magazines when a gentleman of Mr. Bristle's social standing is waiting to take her out.

DAPHNE [*Sinking down on the divan.*] He can wait till Kingdom Come for all of me.

GRANNY. That's right, my dear . . . don't you do it.

MRS. DODD. Mother, will you keep out of this?

GRANNY. [*Shaking her head.*] I won't till I've had my say. There was a time when people would listen to what I had to say instead of pushing me off in a corner just as if I was a painted pansy on a plush cushion.

MRS. DODD. Mother!

GRANNY. She's my flesh and blood as well as she is yours . . . and I won't have her going out with men she hasn't any use for. I won't stand by and see it without saying what's on my mind to say.

MRS. DODD. Mr. Bristle is a gentleman.

GRANNY. Maybe he is, but in my day gentlemen didn't have to go around in white spats to prove it.

MRS. DODD. I suppose you prefer to have her walking the public beaches with that worthless young whippersnapper who hasn't a penny to his name.

DAPHNE. He has. He earns it . . . and that's better than simply *rolling* around in money somebody else worked for the way your Mr. Bristle does.

MRS. DODD. Don't be rude, Daphne.

DAPHNE. I'm sorry, Mother.

MRS. DODD. [*Suddenly raising her eyebrows.*] If you are not interested in Mr. Bristle will you explain why you accept his flowers?

DAPHNE. His flowers? His?

MRS. DODD. Yes. He told me he was sending you roses, red ones . . . for you to wear tonight.

DAPHNE. I hate *red* roses. Hate them. [*She sweeps the flowers into the basket.*] There!

MRS. DODD. [*Shocked.*] Daphne! The idea your acting like this!

DAPHNE. I mean it.

MRS. DODD. This isn't like you.

DAPHNE. I don't mean to be this way. But you make me . . . you make me!

MRS. DODD. It's that man who's to blame. That wretched poetry writer.

DAPHNE. [*Jumping to her feet.*] Don't you talk about his poetry. It's beautiful. Your miserable Bristle writes poetry, too . . . awful poetry. He sent me some of his drivel with these roses. Listen. [*She takes out the paper and reads with every mark of scorn:*]

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

The trash is too silly to repeat.

MRS. DODD. That trash, as you call it, happens to have been written by Byron.

DAPHNE. Byron?

MRS. DODD. [*Triumphantly.*] Yes, Lord Byron.

DAPHNE. Just the same . . . when Lane sends me flowers he doesn't have to steal stuff from other poets, he writes his *own*. Believe me, he doesn't palm off second-hand poetry like your Mr. Bristle.

MRS. DODD. Daphne! I've had enough of this nonsense. You are going to stop all this foolishness at once. Get into your clothes. You are going out to dinner with *us*.

DAPHNE. Well . . . you just watch me! [*She goes across to the telephone and takes up the receiver.*] Granite 2430. Yes, 2430. Please.

MRS. DODD. What are you doing? Daphne, answer me. What are you doing?

GRANNY. She seems to be telephoning.

DAPHNE. Hello . . . hello. Lane, is that you?

MRS. DODD. Daphne!

DAPHNE. Listen, darling . . . do you remember what you said about getting a license? Oh, you got it . . . just in case! Well, I was going to say *No*. Listen, I've changed my mind. It's *Yes*.

MRS. DODD. Daphne, put up that telephone this minute. This minute, I say.

DAPHNE. [*Turns her back and continues to speak into*

the telephone.] Yes, any time you say. Right away? Whew! You take my breath! All right, Darling. Good-bye . . . good-bye.

[*She blows a kiss into the telephone and hangs up the receiver.*]

MRS. DODD. Daphne, what have you done?

DAPHNE. [*Facing her mother squarely.*] Told Lane I'd marry him . . . right away.

MRS. DODD. Daphne, you wouldn't.

DAPHNE. Wouldn't I? Well, you heard me.

MRS. DODD. What do you mean by doing such a thing?

DAPHNE. Mean? I'm a grown person . . . with a mind of my own. I'm tired of being your shadow. I'm tired of living the sort of a life *you* want me to live. I tell you I'm going to marry Lane and live in a little house with hollyhocks against the wall. I tell you I'm going to cook for him, and mend for him, and run down the beach barefooted and . . .

MRS. DODD. You're mad!

DAPHNE. Maybe. But I've got a chance to get all those silly things every girl in the world wants and I'm going to take that chance before it's too late.

[*To hide the tears which are brimming in her eyes she turns and runs into the room at the back.*]

GRANNY. Hurrah!

MRS. DODD. Mother, will you be quiet?

GRANNY. Why should I? I'm glad she's got enough spunk

to get out from under your thumb at last. A fine mess you'd make of her marriage, seeing what a mess you made of your own.

MRS. DODD. [*Glancing at the door, back, then moving closer to her mother.*] Sh-h-h! Mother, how can you? You know I've always tried to keep it from Daphne! I've tried to keep her father's memory sweet.

GRANNY. I don't know but what you were right. He was a devil incarnate if there ever was one . . . but you married him for his money so what else was to be expected? Well, I always said he was the one exception to the old saying that the good die young.

MRS. DODD. I want you to go away and let me talk to Daphne.

GRANNY. Over my dead body! I won't leave the room. I mean to stay right here. All your life you've had your own way. I'm going to see to it that Daffy has hers for once!

MRS. DODD. [*Taking her mother's arm.*] Please let me be alone with her, Mother.

[GRANNY *looks at her stubbornly for a moment then turns, something in the window at the left arrests her attention. Her whole attitude changes. With an almost crafty expression she agrees.*]

GRANNY. [*Rising slowly.*] All right . . . all right. But remember . . . if you go messing in that girl's life I'll stop you somehow. You may think I'm nothing but an old woman, but as the saying goes, "There's life in the old girl yet."

[*She disappears into the hall. She has lifted her voice in song and the words float back:*]

Ach du lieber Augustine, Augustine, Augustine,
Ach du lieber Augustine, alles ist hin!
Geld ist weg, Madl ist weg, alles weg, alles weg,
Ach lieber Augustine, alles ist hin!

[DAPHNE *enters from the room at the back. She is carrying a small suitcase and is wearing her coat and hat.*]

MRS. DODD. My dear, I want to talk with you. Just for a moment.

DAPHNE. It's no use, Mother, my mind is made up.

MRS. DODD. I know it is, darling, I know it is. I can say all I want to tell you in two minutes.

DAPHNE. [*Putting down her suitcase.*] Well—

MRS. DODD. I wish your father were alive. He would be able to tell you . . . to explain to you, what a very serious . . . what a terrible thing you are doing.

DAPHNE. What do you mean?

MRS. DODD. I mean for you to marry like this . . . all of a sudden, to a boy you hardly know.

DAPHNE. But I do know him, Mother, I *do*.

MRS. DODD. [*Lifting her hand.*] Wait, just a minute, please. After the wonderful years I had with your father I can't bear— [*She begins, very beautifully, to break down.*] I can't bear to have you risk ruining your life by a hasty marriage. I simply can't bear it!

DAPHNE. [*Beginning to weaken.*] Mother . . . don't.

MRS. DODD. [*Breaking down completely.*] After losing your father I almost lost my mind. I couldn't sleep nor eat . . . it was the thought of you that made me bear up under it all. I kept saying to myself, over and over again, "My little girl, she'll be with me always . . . always." [*She dabs at her eyes.*] And now you are going to leave me! First your father and now you. [*She begins to sob again.*]

DAPHNE. Mother, I've never heard you talk like this before. I never thought you cared so much for father.

MRS. DODD. It was only because I couldn't bear to speak of him, darling. Couldn't bear it. He was everything . . . everything.

DAPHNE. There . . . there.

MRS. DODD. And now I am losing you too—

DAPHNE. No, Mother . . . no. I'll see Lane and tell him we can't be married tonight after all. Truly I will . . . if you'll only stop crying.

MRS. DODD. I don't want to be selfish.

DAPHNE. You're not selfish. I just didn't understand.

[GRANNY *enters from the hall just in time to hear this last.*]

GRANNY. Understand what?

[MRS. DODD *sits up very straight and looks a trifle uncomfortable.*]

DAPHNE. About father, Granny . . . and how much he meant to Mother.

GRANNY. Well . . . just what did he mean?

MRS. DODD. Everything! You remember, Mother—

GRANNY. Remember? You bet your life I remember . . . everything! [*She comes farther into the room.*] You better hurry up if you're going out to dinner with that greasy-haired Bristle man. He's waiting for you downstairs.

MRS. DODD. [*Rising hastily.*] I'll go see him and explain that you've got a headache, dear. Perhaps if he came to-morrow—

DAPHNE. Not *tomorrow,* Mother.

MRS. DODD. [*Brightly.*] Perhaps . . . the next day, eh? You know how persistent men are, my dear, how *persistent* men are. [*She hurries from the room.*]

DAPHNE. [*Slowly.*] I never dreamed that I meant so much to Mother.

GRANNY. Oh, didn't you?

DAPHNE. She can't bear the thought of my leaving her.

GRANNY. None of us can. Mothers are like that. Why, I never will forget the way I carried on when your mother eloped.

DAPHNE. Eloped? Granny, did you say *eloped?*

GRANNY. Yes. Why? Didn't she tell you all about it when she was saying how happy she was with your father? I should think she would have told you *all* about that.

DAPHNE. Hold on a minute. Let me get this straight. Do you mean to tell me Mother and Father eloped?

GRANNY. [*Nodding vigorously.*] Just that. Yes. I fought against it tooth and toenail . . . did everything I could to stop it, but what I said didn't count for a snap of the finger. I even tried fainting and all that but, shoo, they didn't pay any attention to me. He just took her up in his strong arms and carried her off . . . just like your grandpa did me.

DAPHNE. Grandma!

GRANNY. Land sakes, didn't I ever tell you about that? When my father wouldn't hear of his coming to the house we just jumped on horseback and rode away. We got married in the next county.

DAPHNE. [*Her arms go flying around her grandmother's neck.*] And you were happy, weren't you, Granny? Perfectly happy?

GRANNY. Nobody is ever *perfectly* happy this side of Heaven. But your grandpa loved me right up to the day of his death . . . partly me, and partly my beaten biscuit. [*She laughs.*] Goodness, how that man could eat beaten biscuit!

DAPHNE. [*Who has been thinking of something else.*] But Mother . . . it would hurt her so if I should do a thing like that.

GRANNY. She'd kick up a row, of course. Your Mother always was finicky about some things. But, Lord bless you, she'd get an awful lot of enjoyment out of it while she was kicking. Elopement just comes natural with some people. I did it . . . and my mother before me did it. Then your Mother. It just sort of runs in the family.

DAPHNE. [*In sudden resolution.*] Granny! I've half a mind to do it myself. If I could only get hold of Lane!

GRANNY. [*Pointing toward the window, left.*] He's down there under the window.

DAPHNE. [*Swinging around.*] Under the window?

GRANNY. Yep, in the currant bushes . . . with a ladder. What did you think I was doing all that time your Mother was in here *talking* to you? [*Pushing* DAPHNE *gently toward the window.*] You better hurry up 'fore he catches his death of cold. Don't want to marry a man that's all sniffly, do you?

DAPHNE. [*At the window.*] Yo . . . hoo . . . Lane!

[*She whistles softly. Her whistle is answered from without.*]

GRANNY. That's him.

DAPHNE. He . . . he's putting up a ladder!

GRANNY. No elopment is legal without a ladder.

[*The top of a ladder can be seen coming against the top of the window.*]

DAPHNE. Here . . . quick . . . give me my suitcase!

GRANNY. [*Picking up the case and Daphne's coat.*] Here 'tis . . . and your coat.

DAPHNE. [*Throwing her arms around her grandmother's neck.*] You darling . . . you darling . . . you *darling.*

GRANNY. You get along there and save all them for him.

DAPHNE. Goodbye.

[*She scrambles through the window and disappears down the ladder. The moment she is gone* GRANNY *picks up her skirts and executes a little dance. It is in the very middle of this undignified performance that* MRS. DODD *elects to bustle into the room.* GRANNY *immediately stops her dance and becomes demure.*]

MRS. DODD. Mother! [*She starts toward the room at the back.*] Daphne . . . Daphne. Why, where is she?

GRANNY. Eloped.

MRS. DODD. What do you mean?

GRANNY. Just that . . . eloped. With her poet. I told her how I'd eloped and how you'd eloped and—

MRS. DODD. [*Hurrying to the window.*] Mother, are you crazy? You know very well I never eloped.

GRANNY. [*Shaking her head.*] No, you never had enough spunk for anything so romantic so I had to make it all up . . . but a little *white* lie never hurt anybody.

CURTAIN